Megaprojects and Literature in Chile, Panama, and Brazil

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In dedication to my father David Frye who has both shaped the contents of this project and supported its completion. My father is a living testament to infrastructure having the power not only contour our lives without noticing, but also to penetrate our bodies, contorting our cells and altering our genetic material. My father was exposed to Agent Orange in Vietnam (an infrastructure of war), waded in pools of benzene at an oil refinery (an infrastructure of refining), and brought home with him the sweet smell of gasoline (an infrastructure of affect) to secure opportunities for his five children that he himself did not have. He has been the protective buffer for my own chemical inheritance, and for that I am endlessly thankful.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation analyzes the interrelation of infrastructure, nature, and the human body in Latin American literature. At the mid-twentieth century, infrastructure became the primary tool of developmental statecraft and across Latin America megaprojects became the idols of modernity that obscured environmental effects on vulnerable populations in adjacent regions. While literary analysis of environmental change often fails to consider the complex entanglements of infrastructures and non-human nature and runs the risk of reproducing age-old binaries of nature and culture, this dissertation addresses these concerns in two ways: first, by expanding what is considered traditional infrastructure—like roads and lead pipes—to hydrologic, plant, and chemical infrastructures, and second, by analyzing how these infrastructures operate as environmental forces of power and control. This dissertation employs an assemblage theory framework that focuses on intersections of environmental change and the discourses and literatures that create meaning. The Chuquicamata mine in Northern Chile, the Panama Canal, and Zona Franca of Manaus emerge in literary works by Pablo Neruda, Gil Blas Tejeira, Joaquín Beleño, Márcio Souza, and Milton Hatoum as complex assemblages of infrastructures and non-human nature that enmesh and poison the bodies of miners, Afro-Antilleans, and those living on the urban margins of Latin America. This dissertation makes the following claims: first, literary works function as testimony that bears witness to the hidden, negative effects of megaprojects; and second, these negative effects can be traced in the literary text at the overlap between infrastructure, non-human nature, and the human body.

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation analyzes the interrelation of infrastructure, nature, and the human body in Latin American literature. Far from separate, these three fields often enmesh with one another to form complex assemblages of matter and meaning. At the mid-twentieth century, infrastructure became the primary tool of developmental statecraft. Across Latin America new infrastructures became idols of modernity, and megaprojects were cast as protagonists in the theater of development. This dissertation analyzes literary works from Chile, Panama, and Brazil that contest developmental statecraft's universalizing scope and give voice to local narratives of resistance. Mining poetry, canal novels, and trade zone stories shed light on the impact of megaprojects for local communities and environments. This dissertation makes the following claims: first, that literature is a testimonial that bears witness to the negative effects of megaprojects; and second, these negative effects can be traced in the overlap between infrastructure, nature, and the human body.

Colossal infrastructural projects, or megaprojects as they will be called in this dissertation, refer to a wide range of transportation, industrial, commercial, and mixed-use infrastructure that tend to top $1 billion in capital investment. Bent Flyvbjerg calls these projects a "new animal" in the built environment (1), animals with the power to change national and international fortunes. While there are many successful megaprojects across the globe, their problems often include "adverse environmental effects (landscape erosion, noise pollution, toxic emissions etc.)" (1).[1] This dissertation focuses less on

[1] See Domínguez and Corona's analysis of megaprojects in Latin America in *Megaproyectos y los dilemas del desarrollo en Latinoamérica*, 11.

dollar amount than the national and transnational imaginings of Latin American megaprojects. In fact, this dissertation mobilizes the term "megaproject" in a more general way to refer to those infrastructural projects that irrevocably alter socio-ecological relations in a region. By introducing new water sources, new plant and chemical infrastructures, as well as toxic pollutants, megaprojects reshape the relation between the human and non-human and continue to challenge the binary of "nature" and "culture."

Diverse infrastructures appear across Latin American fiction, from Early Modernity to the twenty-first century. In 1542, for example, Dominican friar Gaspar Carvajal wrote on the infrastructures of conquest in *Relación de Gaspar de Carvajal*, which recounts the first conquistadors on the Amazon River. Led by Captain Francisco Orellana, and with the help of indigenous guides, a company of 57 men travelled from the snow-capped mountains of Ecuador down the Amazon River in the search for gold and cinnamon. Carvajal describes the journey down the Amazon River as *la obra* (the work) in two ways: as a metaphor for conquest[2] and, in a literal sense, as the building that took place on the banks of the river. Carvajal writes, "Diose tan buena manera nuestra compañía en este pueblo, en la fábrica de esta obra, que en 20 días, mediante Dios, se hicieron 2000 clavos muy buenos y otras cosas" (Our company took to the *pueblo* and in the *fábrica* of *esta obra*, that in 20 days, through God, 2000 very good nails were made

[2] See Fernández-Santamaria's *Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda on the Nature of the American Indians*, which examines the Aristotelian approach to human nature as a guiding force to understanding indigenous peoples of the Americas.

along with other things; 19).[3] Carvajal's use of the term *fábrica,* from Latin *faber* (smith), is not metaphorical, but the infrastructural apparatus of conquest: nails to connect rafts forged by felling trees for coal taking some 20 days.[4] This account foregrounds infrastructure within a Latin American literary tradition where infrastructure produces a sort of comfort from the unknown, a sentiment captured by actor Klaus Kinski in *Aguirre, Wrath of God*.

Infrastructure carries with it the promise of a modernity apart from nature.[5] This promise undergoes an important transformation throughout the nineteenth century. As scientific expeditions systematically aggrandized Latin America, naturalists like Alexander von Humboldt aggrandized the task of observation and cataloguing.[6] The sublime character of Latin American landscapes depicted in Von Humboldt, however, was transformed during the Latin American independence movements into the truly colossal task of engineering and statecraft, evidence of which can be found in Simon

[3] Carvajal chronicles the work of conquest in great detail: "Y a los demás compañeros mandó que de tres en tres diesen buena hornada de carbón, lo cual se puso luego por obra, y tomó cada uno su herramienta y se van al monte a cortar leña y traerla a cuestas desde el monte hasta el pueblo, que habría media legua, y hacen sus hoyos, y esto con muy gran trabajo" (And the remaining men were sent by threes to make a batch of coal, which they put to good use toward the work; each took their tool and went to the woods to cut wood and bring it from the forest to the pueblo, which would be a half league, and they made their pits, which required great work; 18).

[4] Herzog's *Aguirre, the Wrath of God* (1977) also captures the forge and nails with great detail.

[5] See Anand, Gupta, and Appel, *The Promise of infrastructure*.

[6] See Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 120; see also Astuhuamán Gonzáles, "La Arquitectura Inca," 57.

Bolivar's "Carta de Jamaica" (1815). Bolivar notes the enormous potential for engineering feats like the Panama and Nicaraguan Canals, which "acortarán las distancias del mundo" (will cut worldly distance; 19) and bring together the so-called Old and New Worlds. The promise of infrastructure made in the mid-twentieth century contains a legacy throughout conquest, colonial period, and independence periods, and can located at the division between old and new, science/engineering and nature.

In the post-WWII era, infrastructure became central to development in the so-called Global South. In *La invención del tercer mundo*, Arturo Escobar writes that by the beginning of the 1950s, development "era ya hegemónica en los círculos de poder" (was already hegemonic in the circles of global power; 21).[7] US President Harry S. Truman commented on development as early as 1949, and at his inaugural address in 1961, John F. Kennedy characterized development as the United States's "best efforts to help them help themselves."[8] Development banking conducted by the IMF, World Bank, and Interamerican Development Bank additionally shaped the economic landscape of center-periphery of the Bretton-Woods global economic system.[9] In Latin America, development took on a particular intensity. Brazilian President Juscelino Kubitschek

[7] See also Escobar's, *Encountering Development*, which cogently illustrates the developmentalism at the mid-twentieth century.

[8] John F. Kennedy's full quote is illustrative of the United States's position on development in the Global South: JFK "To those people in the huts and villages of half the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass misery, we pledge our best efforts to help them help themselves, for whatever period is required—not because the communists may be doing it, not because we seek their votes, but because it is right" (Transcribed from John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum).

[9] See Steger, *Globalization,* 3–6.

(1956-1961) ran his campaign on the promise of "50 anos em 5" (50 years in 5), to move forward the hands of time. Kubitschek's temporal framing of development infrastructure is reminiscent of Bolivar's characterization of an isthmian canal as having the capacity to shorten the lag time between the new and the old.[10] Shaped like an airplane, Brazil's new capital Brasilia symbolized a line of flight through what developmentalist W. W. Rostow called the "stages of growth" (1).[11] Some years after the construction of Brasilia, the Brazilian military government seized power and mobilized a vast developmentalist campaign in Amazonia with megaprojects like the Trans-Amazonian Highway and the Zona Franca of Manaus. Developmentalism took hold across Latin America to such a degree that megaprojects from the late nineteenth century—like the Panama Canal and the Chuquicamata mine in Chile—were recast as agents of modernization, as well as monuments of the nation-state, and surrogates for control. Censorship in Brazil, Chilean concentration camps, Canal Zone police brutality, and state violence more generally stifled criticisms of the Latin American infrastructural promise, and it is for this reason that among the most ardent critiques of infrastructure can be found in works of literature.

This dissertation examines novels, short stories, and poetry as both critical imaginings and testimony of socio-environmental antagonisms (re)produced by

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[10] See Ferguson, "Decomposing Modernity," 178.

[11] See Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 117–132; see also Maram, "Juscelino Kubitschek and the Politics of Exuberance, 1956–1961," 31–45. W. W. Rostow defines the economic stages of growth in the following way: "a set of stages of growth, which can be designated as follows: the traditional society; the preconditions for take-off; the take-off; the drive to maturity; the age of high mass consumption" (1).

megaprojects. In *The Political Unconscious*, Fredric Jameson makes the following observation: "the literary work or cultural object, as though for the first time, brings into being that very situation to which it is also, at one and the same time, a reaction" (82). This dissertation considers literature arising from a social, political, historical, psychic, and ecological milieu, and thus possesses what Mikhail Bakhtin calls an inherent dialogism, or a multiplicity of perspectives and voices.[12] The cacophony of voices in the literary text is also dissonant, and, as Jameson points out, echoes literature's inherent antagonisms that are part and parcel of social contradictions.[13] This dissertation analyzes literature at the site of a particular antagonism: nature, infrastructure, and the human. I focus on what Anna Tsing calls "open-ended assemblages of entangled ways of life" that are produced within Latin American megaproject literature (4). I read discourse and materiality as entangled with one another, thus requiring "an immanentist–materialist" approach.[14] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari move away from representation (of the sublime, for example) and focus on literary "in-between spaces" where characters are already imbued with their material environments, regardless of a disjunction between categories of the human, nature, and infrastructure.[15] This approach to reading megaproject literatures allows us to cut through what Rob Nixon calls the "drama deficit"

[12] See Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 426.

[13] See Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 77. In *Misplaced Ideas*, Schwartz employs the concept of dissonance as a force within the colonial and post-colonial literary history of Brazil (24).

[14] See Saldanha, *Deleuze and Race*, 7.

[15] See Buchanan and Marks, *Deleuze and Literature*, 7.

that exists when environments change without our noticing.[16] This dissertation identifies toxification and enmeshment as essential features of literature's embodiment of eco-social contradictions.

Ecocriticism, or the study of literatures and environments, runs the risk of being a catchall for diverse critical approaches, while running the parallel risk of being narrowly focused on "green" as metonymy for complex eco-social relations.[17] Doubtless, however, is the importance of ecocritical approaches that examine the contradictions of capital and the non-human world. Lawrence Buell categorizes ecocriticism by first and second waves, writing, "The prioritization of issues of environmental justice—the maldistribution of environmental benefits and hazards between white and nonwhite, rich and poor—is second-wave ecocriticism's most distinctive activist edge, just as preservationist ecocentrism was for the first wave" (96). This dissertation expands upon ecocritical works originating in the second wave and that link literature, development, and environmental fallout. Rob Nixon makes this connection in *Slow Violence*, highlighting the clear relation between global (under)development and the Great Acceleration, a moment around 1945 of increasing circulation of global capital and anthropogenic climate change.[18] Around the mid-twentieth century, earth time seems to have changed and terms like the Anthropocene and Capitalocene have come to describe

[16] See Nixon, *Slow Violence*, 264.

[17] See Buell's forward to *Prismatic Ecology*, in which he raises a similar preoccupation (ix).

[18] See Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History." Chakrabarty calls for the "Collapse of the Age-old Humanist Distinction between Natural History and Human History" (201); see also Steffen, et al. "The Trajectory of the Anthropocene: The Great Acceleration," 81–98.

these entangled histories.[19] The Great Acceleration of carbon in the atmosphere is coeval with the early years of the developmentalist period in Latin America.

The Hispanic and Lusophone environmental humanities have made important interventions into the relation between literature, development, and the environments they create. Fernando Mires writes in *El discurso de la naturaleza* that environmental concerns received little attention at the Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean (CEPAL), and it was not until the 1980s that environmental concerns—"nombrado por cortesía" (named in politeness)—were heard.[20] Literary works, on the other hand, criticized the imperialist bent of development, growing what Antonio Candido calls a "consciousness of underdevelopment," which "functions as a premonition and then as a consciousness of crisis, motivating the documentary and, with a feeling of urgency, political engagement" (136). The experience of environmental crisis—along with premonitions of future crises—can be seen across literary genre: socialist realism, *la novela de la tierra*, protest novels, epic poetry, magical realism, and the neobaroque.[21] In *Fictional Environments*, Victoria Saramago points out the power of

[19] See Moore's *Anthropocene or Capitalocene?*, 6; White describes Columbia River fish hatcheries taking on an industrial quality of the biological (47 *The Organic Machine*); see also Swyngedouw, *Liquid Power*, who observes dictatorial power manifested in aquatic infrastructure in Spain.

[20] Heffes and French periodize developmentalism as Latin American environmental history in *The Latin American Ecocultural Reader* (211).

[21] See Anderson's *Disaster Writing in Latin America*, an edited volume that endeavors to understand Latin American art, literature and film at the forefront for contesting narratives of nature in Latin America with growing ecological crisis. For an analysis of *la novela de la tierra*, see Hoeg; see also Ileana Rodriguez's *House, Garden, Nation*, which points to women guerrilla writers disrupting the *latinfundio* as the sole spatial framework of the nation. See also White, *Airando el aire*, which is an encyclopedic work on

literature to shape—and be shaped by—environmental policy in Latin America, an example of which can be found at Grande Sertão Veredas National Park that was named after the 1950 novel by João Guimarães Rosa. Literature offers a unique opportunity to study the enunciations of individuals and groups during moments of environmental crisis and the Hispanic and Lusophone environmental humanities has become a diverse field posing environmental questions of the nation, of US imperialism, and of dictatorships, all of which will be analyzed in the coming chapters.

What much of the literary analysis of the environmental collapse misses, however, is a consideration of the role of infrastructure within the framework of environmental crisis. This dissertation addresses this concern by expanding what is considered to be traditional infrastructure like roads and lead pipes.[22] Instead, the coming chapters analyze water, plants, and chemicals as crucial infrastructures. Anthropologist Ashley Carse describes water, plant, and chemical infrastructures as "Nature as Infrastructure," or in other words, environmental forces instrumentalized for management and profit.[23] This framework, however, explains only half of the equation. Infrastructure

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environmental literature and music in Nicaragua. In "Rural and Urban Rivers," Raymond Leslie Williams makes a compelling argument about the urbanization of rivers in the novels of Gabriel García Márquez (196). See also Mark Anderson's analysis of the baroque style in Euclides Da Cunha's *Os sertões* (1902) and José Eustacio Rivera's *La vorágine* (1924). See also Beilin, Connolly, and McKay, *Environmental Cultural Studies Through Time*.

[22] In *Public Works,* Rubenstein offers a compelling argument for a postcolonial critique of literature and development by focusing on infrastructure. Rubenstein engages with Gayatari Spivak's commentary about teaching infrastructures to make the case for public utilities as part and parcel of the postcolonial project (14).

[23] See Carse, "Nature as Infrastructure," 539.

or not, plants grow and waters flood, and chemicals aerosolize well beyond the instrumentalization of nature. In fact, when infrastructures operate in this way, they do so within the field of non-human nature. Echoing Anna Tsing's *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, this approach asks what manages to live despite the construction of megaprojects in Latin America, and what relations and resistances exist therein.[24] The literary works analyzed in the coming chapters describe an infrastructural system of divisions, boarders, and zones, according to race, class, and gender, but also entanglements, viscosity, and enmeshments.[25]

Chapter One organizes a theoretical approach according to scale, beginning with the large-scale production of space in Latin American literature and moves toward the enmeshment of human and non-human particles on the cellular level. This chapter hinges on the overlap between the production of nature and infrastructure in Latin America and points to the coloniality of nature and infrastructure as deeply entangled epistemological frameworks. The second half of this chapter pivots toward an aesthetics of viscosity and enmeshment, two features of megaprojects that move beyond Kantian and Heideggerian frameworks of emergence and focus instead on the inconspicuousness of infrastructure that acts upon the human body before noticing it. By mobilizing the multi-scaled concept of the assemblage this chapter brings into direct conversation the questions of scale,

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[24] See Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, viii.

[25] In *Infrastructures of Race*, Nemser posits congregation, enclosure, segregation, and collection as key functions in the coloniality of infrastructure, and in particular, the power of infrastructure to produce racial realities in colonial Latin America (20); see also Nelson, "The More you Kill the More you Will Live," on race, indigeneity, and infrastructure during the Guatemalan Civil War (122).

materiality, and discursivity manifested in the literary text.

Chapter Two examines Pablo Neruda's *Canto general* (1950), and in particular, the Cantos that take place at the Chuquicamata mine in Northern Chile, one of the largest open pit copper mines in the world. Through his own travels to the mine of Chuquicamata, Pablo Neruda bore witness to an increasingly toxic region and a rift between the productive forces of largely indigenous miners and the capacity of the earth. In this chapter, I argue that Neruda evokes a double articulation of, on the one hand, a metabolic rift, and on the other the environmental toxification experienced in the bodies of not only miners, but also those in the surrounding areas. This chapter identifies indigenous storytelling with proletariat imagery as an essential style that evokes the unseen chemical infrastructures pervading Chuquicamata and the eponymous company town that, 57 years later, was evacuated due to airborne pollutants.

Chapter Three compares two *Novelas canaleras* (Canal Novels) from the 1960s that criticize the US intervention, construction, and segregation in the Panama Canal Zone. This chapter departs from the sublime aesthetic motif that painted man as a small figure against the backdrop of a colossal and often tropical "nature," a motif that in its Kantian formulation is defined by a perceptive distance between the aesthetic object and the subject who interprets it. *Pueblos perdidos* (1963) by Gil Blas Tejeira blurs the distinctions between infrastructure and non-human nature, excavating those submerged histories inundated by the construction of the Panama Canal. In a similar way, *Los forzados de Gamboa* (1960) by Joaquín Beleño fuses the human body with the Canal Zone landscape, its plants, along with its infrastructures. Existing scholarship on the Canal Novels typically centers on the fraught racial dynamics they bring to light in

negotiations of the nation or *panameñeidad*. The analysis in this chapter, however, centers infrastructural enmeshment within the discussion of racial and environmental justice in the former US Canal Zone.

Chapter Four identifies a neobaroque aesthetics in the short story collections *A caligrafia de Deus* (1993) by Márcio Souza and *A cidade ilhada* (2009) by Milton Hatoum, which take place during the military dictatorship's developmentalist campaign in Amazonia (1964–1985). With import-substitution and national security at the center of the military dictatorship's neocolonial push to reconquer Amazonia, on the eastern reaches of the city of Manaus, the Zona Franca of Manaus began to take shape as a conglomeration of factories, warehouses, new roads and infrastructures, and grazing land for industrial food production. Radios, motorcycles, and the televisions that aired popular *novelas* of the late 1960s and early 1970s bore the emblem "Produzido no Polo Industrial de Manaus." The six short stories I analyze in this chapter employ neobaroque aesthetics as a way to trace the proliferation of dictatorial violence and degradation of the city's urban ecologies. The toxicity of the city's waterways (igarapés), the state-led cleansing of adjacent neighborhoods, ruins of the neoclassical architecture of the "Paris of the Tropics," and the proliferation of new commodities and contraband on the streets together serve as reminders of the unseen effects of the Zona Franca in Manaus.

To review, this dissertation sets out to accomplish three things: first, highlight a growing preoccupation with development at the cost of human and non-human life during the mid-twentieth century; second identify how and where Latin American writers trace zones of separation and entanglement of infrastructure, non-human nature, and its uneven effects on the human body; and third, to bear witness to the communities poisoned,

flooded, and dispossessed by megaprojects across Latin America. Moving against the dominant material and discursive structure of development, the literary works in this dissertation evoke the environmental costs of development, and while individually, these chapters create a case study framework, these critical concerns emerge in concert. Chief among these shared critical concerns is the move beyond static concepts of non-human nature and infrastructure to more accurately define how people become marginalized by inconspicuous infrastructures in their environments.

CHAPTER I
Nature, Infrastructure, and Enmeshment

This chapter engages theoretical approaches to the study of megaprojects in Latin America focusing on three interrelated concerns: the production of nature, infrastructure, and emergent relations between humans and the non-human. This chapter highlights a particular overlap between non-human nature—like plants and water—and infrastructure, which is predominantly characterized as the cement and metal that tether together the built environment. Additionally, this theoretical framework is organized according to scale, beginning with large-scale contradictions of capitalism and moving toward the enmeshment of human and non-human particles on the cellular level. This multi-scaled method requires the theoretical approach of assemblage theory. An assemblage, a term theorized by French theorists Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari describes multi-scaled discourses and environmental realities shaped by capitalist production and human desire. The central claim of this chapter is that, in Latin American literature, the spaces produced by megaprojects can be read as zones of enmeshment, where nature become infrastructure and vice versa and where the human body is left vulnerable to toxification.

The first three sections of this chapter define the production of space, nature, and infrastructure in Latin American literature. These sections ask the important question of how capitalism and coloniality produce space, nature, and infrastructure. The fourth section of this chapter moves from the epistemologies of space to the study of ontology by identifying "viscosity" and "enmeshment" as experiences of living near megaprojects like a canal, a free trade zone, or a colossal mine. The fifth section of this chapter makes a final pivot toward characterizing megaprojects as assemblages, a term from the lexicon

of Deleuze and Guattari that brings discourse into direct conversation with geology, commodity production, and desire. This theoretical intervention locates emergent ontologies in the literary text that were previously inconspicuous.

The Production of Space in Latin American Literature

This section is concerned with the spatial character of capitalism in Latin America. Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (1974), Michel Foucault's published lecture "Security, Territory, Population" (1977), and Ángel Rama's *La ciudad letrada* (1984) together analyze the production of seemingly inconspicuous elements of space and power. This section analyzes the production of space in a diverse series of literary movements across twentieth-century Latin America so as to situate the question of infrastructure within an extant theoretical milieu.[26] As Aarti Smith Madan writes in *Lines of Geography in Latin American Narrative*, writers in Latin America "instantiate geography's political relevance by means of literature" (5).

Latin American authors like Euclides da Cunha and José Mariátegui wrote extensively on the production of Latin American space in the first half of the twentieth century. In *Os sertões* (1902), a work chronicling the War of Canudos in Northeastern Brazil (1893–1897), Da Cunha writes the Brazilian backlands as adversarial:

> Ao passo que a caatinga o afoga; abrevia-lhe o olhar; agride-o e estonteia-o; enlaça-o na trama espinescente e não o atrai; repulsa-o com as folhas

[26] Bruno Bosteels points out that the production of space must properly situate this turn within a local critical tradition. See Bosteels, "New Cartographies in Iberian and Latin American Studies."

> urticantes, com o espinho, com os gravetos estalados em lanças; e desdobra-se lhe na frente léguas e léguas, imutável no aspecto desolado. (32)
>
> (Here the caatinga brushland engulfs him. It cuts off his field of vision. It attacks and stupefies him. It tangles him up in its thorny scheme of things and has no attraction for him. Rather, it repels him with its stinging leaves, its thorns, its dry wood standing up like lances. And it unfolds before him for mile upon mile, unchanging in its desolate look).[27]

Da Cunha applies this spatial poetics in a similar way to the Brazilian Amazon in *À margem da história*, where the vastness of space subsumes time altogether.

The poetics of Da Cunha, however, are lost on José Mariátegui, whose *7 ensayos de interpretación de la realidad peruana* (1928) analyzes the spatial economy of twentieth-century Peru. Mariátegui frames the question of space in agrarian and ethnic terms, pointing out the Inca "allyu," or communal farmland, which were replaced by *mitas* and *encomiendas* during conquest and colonialism. After Peruvian independence, these spaces were turned over into *latifundios*, or vast estates worked on by landed peasants and controlled by a single owner. In this spatial transformation, indigenous roots to the land were withered away by large land holders and intermediaries, which slowly displaced small farmers or ensnared indigenous workers within a peonage system. Both Da Cunha and Mariátegui frame their critical interventions on Latin American space in rural spaces. However, backlands, jungles, and rural landscapes give way to an increasing

[27] Translation by Lowe, Penguin edition of *Backlands*.

focus on urban spatial thinking, brought about by Latin American urban expansion of the early twentieth century.

Works of literary fiction also shaped spatial narratives of the early twentieth century, and this is especially true of the pan-Latin American modernist and avant-garde movements. Urban space in particular became the *belle ile* of José Martí and Rubén Darío, and it is in their *crónicas* (chronicles) in the metropolitan newspapers where their spatial critiques are most evident. In *Desencuentros de la modernidad* (1989), Julio Ramos characterizes the chronicle, or journalistic narrative, as uniquely "flexible" like a "guide through the ever-more refined and complex market of cultural goods, contributing to the materialization of a rhetoric of consumption and publicity" (113). The literary style of the chronicle substantiated the fragmentation of city life in narratological form and consolidated the optic of the *flâneur*, or man who strolls about town feeling equal parts bewilderment and ennui. Public transportation within cities also became an engine for fragmentation and subject formation, like in the case of the narrator-passenger of Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera's "La novela del Tranvía" (1882). The chronicle's capacity to produce the fragmentation of urban space for readers was, a decade later, replaced by more radical poetry and manifestos by the Latin America avant-garde.

The Latin America avant-garde movement began in 1922 during the Semana de Arte Moderna in São Paulo and offers further explication of narrative form and Latin American urban spaces. What was non-human nature for the pre-Romantics, as Rama claims, shifted to the all-encompassing importance of the modern city for the *vanguardistas* (59). *Estridentismo* (Mexico), *ultraísmo* (Argentina), *vanguardismo* (Nicaragua), and *modernismo* (Brazil) were literary movements born out of the Latin

American metropolitan centers. In 1924, Mexican poet Manuel Maples Arce published the manifestó "Urbe: Súper-poema bolchevique," in which he claims "[la ciuadad] es una proyección hacia los espejismos interiores" ([the city] is a projection toward the illusions of the inner world; Canto 3).[28] In Mário de Andrade's modernist novel *Macunaíma*, the Amazonian protagonist arrives to the city of São Paulo of the mid-1920s and exclaims, "Eram máquinas e tudo na cidade era só máquina!" (They were machines and everything in the city was just machines; 45). For the Latin American avant-garde, the city was a source of inspiration as well as the site of artistic intervention, which opened the possibility of reimagining the spaces of social life and art.

Avant-garde manifestos proclaim in no uncertain terms, art was to inhabit all spheres of life, and in particular, urban life.[29] Latin American spatial thinking, however, takes a more critical position. Rama's *La ciudad letrada* (1977) is among the most well-known works on space in Latin America and signals a trans-Atlantic critical project of thinking about cities, capital, and power. Rama cites Foucault's conceptualization of "order" as the driving logic of space in colonial Latin America,[30] which is made evident in Fernando II's letter to Pedrarias Dávila: "el pueblo parezca *ordenado*," (may the town appear ordered; cited in Rama, 20). City planning in colonial Latin America reflected the aspirations of order imposed by Spain. In other words, the city was to be "planificada, en

[28] See "Urbe: Súper-poema bolchevique" presently housed at the Met Museum digital collection.

[29] For a wide-ranging discussion of space and literature of the Latin American metropole, see Navascués, *La ciudad imaginaria.*

[30] In "Epistemology and The Lettered City," Gorman Malone draws a parallel between theorizations of order in Foucault and Rama.

obediencia de la exigencias colonizadoras, administrativas, militares, comerciales, religiosas, que irían imponiéndose con creciente rigidez" (planned in obedience to the colonial, administrative, military, commercial, and religious requirements, which would impose themselves with growing rigidity; 17). Rama, like Foucault, conducts a spatial analysis of epistemology, a fact made apparent in what Rama calls the city within the city, or an urban logos that was "no menos amurallada ni menos sino más agresiva y redentorista" (no less walled and no less aggressive and redentorista; 17). The written word passed from the scrivener to writers, educators, bureaucrats, and intellectuals—*los letrados* (the lettered).[31] Rama takes as an example Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's *Facundo* (1845) that addresses the tension between *la capital y las pampas* (the capital and the pampas)[32] as the space of civilization and barbarism respectively. In this literary history, space is produced by *los letrados* for *los letrados.* What I have laid out in this section is evidence of a significant spatial orientation in Latin American works. This summary offers a glimpse into spatial debates across Latin America, which, importantly, are distilled in letters, chronicles, manifestos, and novels. The following section describes the production of nature.

The Dialectic of Nature

Essential to the production of space is the dialectic of nature. Marx observes the dialectic of nature emerging in the context of labor. He writes in *Capital I,*

[31] *Los letrados* (the lettered) is gendered *a propos* the access to centers of power.

[32] See Rama, 26.

> Labour is, in the first place, a process in which both man and Nature participate, and in which man of his own accord starts, regulates, and controls the material reactions between himself and Nature. He opposes himself to nature as one of her own forces, setting in motion arms and legs, head and hands, the natural forces of his body, in order to appropriate nature's productions in a form adapted to his own wants. By thus acting on the external world and changing it, he at the same time changes his own nature. (283)

This is the dialectic of nature: humans as products-producers of non-human nature, and thus the victims-agents of non-human nature's destruction. Neil Smith writes "even to posit nature as external to society […] is literally absurd since the very act of positing nature requires entering a certain relation with nature" (32). This relationship arises from "the metabolic interaction of human societies with nature" through labor (35). However, "this material substratum [nature] is more and more the product of social production, and the dominant axes of differentiation are increasingly societal in origin" (49–50). This is perhaps the most striking contradiction of capital, and indeed the most glaring of its two-fold contradictions. There is not enough earth to endlessly extract, but an endless human desire to extract it and on the other hand, to posit non-human nature as a resource implies a certain relation to it. Enrique Dussel and Walter Mignolo examine the dialectic of nature through the concept of coloniality. Dussel claims that simplification caused by an overvaluation of instrumental reason shaped the human/non-human binary. The role of Francis Bacon, Rene Descartes, and John Locke framing this relationship cannot be overstated, but they follow historically the scholastic intellectual tradition popular during

Spanish conquest. In *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*, Mignolo writes, "'nature'—as a concrete noun that names the physical non-human world—became in the New World the basis for the cultivation of sugar, tobacco, cotton, and so forth" (12). The epistemology of extraction allows Mignolo to identify the marginalization of indigenous ways of knowing and relating to non-human nature. Mignolo's analysis of the epistemology of extraction can be applied to early modern native language dictionaries like Alonso de Molina's *Vocabulario En Lengua Castellana Y Mexicana* (1585), which describes in full detail the complex meanings of nature in Nahuatl that are later subsumed by *naturaleza* (nature).[33] Words like *teyeliz*, *iuhcayotl*, *iuhquiçaliztili*, and *iuhtlacatilztli* were covered over by the concept of *naturaleza*,[34] which is an example of how the colonial system of language shapes non-human nature's horizon of potential meaning.

The coloniality of nature provides a critical framework with which to trace the legacy of colonialism in the environments of Latin American literature. In *La naturaleza colonizada*, Héctor Alimonda synthesizes the coloniality of nature as a transformation of environmental diversity and practice that were conceived as simply a "plataforma de tierras tropicales incorporadas al espacio hegemónico europeo, aptas para una producción de gran beneficio" (platform of tropical lands incorporated into hegemonic European space apt for production of great benefit; 47). Boaventura de Sousa Santos argues convincingly that within "los descubrimientos imperiales" (imperial discoveries), an

[33] The transcription from Molina's *Vocabulario En Lengua Castellana Y Mexicana* (1585).

[34] In *1492*, Dussel argues convincingly of conquest as en-cubrimiento (covering over) instead of des-cubrimiento (discovery) (31).

epistemological framework arose that deemed Asia as the enemy, the savage inferior, and non-human nature as "un recurso a merced de los humanos" (a resource at the mercy of humankind; 126).[35] A double articulation becomes evident in the coloniality of nature: non-human nature is exterior to the human world, and often dialectically opposed to it, yet is conceived of as a resource of enormous potential for human endeavors. Evidence of this double articulation can be found in Pope Alexander IV's *Inter caetera* (1493): "with the utmost diligence sailing in the ocean sea, discovered certain very remote islands and even mainlands that hitherto had not been discovered by others…In the islands and countries already discovered are found gold, spices, and very many other precious things of divers kinds and qualities" (*Papal Encyclicals Online*).

As capitalism and coloniality wreak havoc on the environmental systems of earth, concepts like the coloniality of nature also run the risk of being misinterpreted as the absence of living systems entirely. Anna Tsing ponders in *The Mushroom at the End of the World*: "what manages to live despite capitalism" (viii)? Tsing theorizes "third nature," which she describes as "open-ended assemblages of entangled ways of life" (viii). We should instead be asking ourselves what manages to live, even thrive, within these open-ended assemblages of enduring colonial capitalist entanglements? To answer this question, the following section pivots toward infrastructure.

[35] See Leff, *Ecología y capital*, in which he writes that the most lasting effect of the technological and extractive framework of coloniality of nature exists in the destruction of productive potential (155).

Infrastructure

Infrastructure has a way of shaping our lives without our noticing it. In fact, we often only notice infrastructure when it fails before our very eyes. Rubenstein, Robbins, and Beal claim "the inherent boringness of infrastructure is paradoxically a big part of what makes it so theoretically fascinating" (576). Brian Larkin frames this paradox of infrastructure in terms of its "peculiar ontology": "they are things and also the relation between things" and for this reason "cannot be theorized in terms of the object alone" (329). Locks and dams, chain-link fencing, and copper wire, for example, are infrastructures that not only operate as objects, but also within relationships to people, non-human nature, and other objects. While on the one hand, infrastructure evokes a totality and public good, on the other hand, it falls into the background of daily life. The analysis in the following chapters reveals that this is made possible by infrastructure operating as non-human nature, and thus, entangling itself with complex forms of power over human life. non-human, while at the same time imagining new possibilities of unity and resistance.

Ashley Carse's "Nature as infrastructure" is particularly instructive for examining the complexity of large infrastructure projects. "It may seem peculiar to refer to landscapes or landforms as infrastructure," Carse writes, "a term often reserved for roads, railways, and power lines. Infrastructure implies artifice; nature typically signifies its absence" (540). Carse discovers this peculiar ontology of infrastructure in the Panama Canal. The desired objective of the Panama Canal, for example, is to create a passage for global trade, and perhaps obviously, the Lake Gatún reservoir controls the water level of the canal; the water that fills the Panama Canal is infrastructure. This is also true of Canal

Zone plant life. In *Beyond the Big Ditch*, Carse writes, "Seeing an iconic canal through a weed [invasive water hyacinth] illustrates how profoundly our infrastructures are entangled with our political ecologies" and how the "boundaries between the technical, social, and environmental are always porous and in flux" (217; 23). *Paja canalera* [*Saccharum spontaneum L.*] appears simply as tall grass but was planted as infrastructure to fortify the banks of the canal (see fig. 1).[36] This seemingly innocuous weed supports Carse's equation: nature as infrastructure. This, however, only describes one side of the equation. This dissertation examines both *nature as infrastructure* as well as *infrastructure as nature* in literary works. Nature as infrastructure defines the natural world operating as component infrastructures of a megaproject. Infrastructure as nature, on the other hand, describes the experience of infrastructures that operate as nature, or rather, within an ecology of weeds, water, air, minerals, and dust. This is ontological slippage.

The coloniality of infrastructure describes the enduring legacy of colonial power present in infrastructures of post-colonial regions, and in this case, Latin America. Daniel Nemser writes in *Infrastructures of Race*, that infrastructures are "a powerful reminder that certain material structures and practices can endure the vicissitudes of history and politics" (20). As witnessed in the coloniality of nature, infrastructures carry with them ways of dividing socio-ecological life. Infrastructures, like walls, plazas, llama paths, and canals, act as agents that not only maintain racial divisions of Afro-descendants,

[36] I make this claim after conducting field work in Gamboa, Panama in the summer of 2015; see also "Paja canalera: Científica del Smithsonian esclarece leyenda urbana panameña."

indigenous, and mestizo peoples from those of Spanish descent, but also reproduce them. The coloniality of infrastructure, as Nemser signals, overlaps with colonial rationalizations of non-human nature. I claim that toxicity operates in this overlap as chemical, plant, and water infrastructures segregate and displace. These infrastructures enmesh with the bodies of those who work and live nearby. Thus, among the many reasons for infrastructural benevolence is because it is hidden under a conceptual framework of nature: outside, immutable, and non-human. In the following section, I narrow the focus of analysis to concepts that focus on this slippery characteristic of infrastructure—to be both infrastructure as well as non-human nature.

Viscosity and Enmeshment

How does nature become infrastructure and how does infrastructure become nature? This section points to two characteristics of megaprojects that aid us in answering this question: viscosity and enmeshment. These concepts embody what Tsing calls "open-ended assemblages of entangled ways of life" and help interrogate the often-hidden operations of infrastructure as nature, and its asymmetrical socio-ecological fallout. Infrastructure is conceptually viscous. In *Material Feminisms*, Nancy Tuana writes, "viscous porosity helps us understand an interactionist attention to the processes of becoming in which unity is dynamic and always interactive and agency is diffusely enacted in complex networks of relations" (188–89). Applied to the context of megaprojects, I analyze infrastructures like plants, waterways, and geologic strata that stick to and poison those working and living nearby. Enmeshment, a concept employed by Timothy Morton, provides a mnemonic for reading infrastructure as environmental

pollution creeping into the human body without people knowing it.[37] Viscosity and enmeshment are essential terms for reading megaproject literature because they map out hidden ways of control and also potential ways of resisting these forces.

Kantian idealism, a non-ontological ethics, rests on a fundamental distinction between humans and objects. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant writes, "if we remove our own subject or even only the subjective constitution on the senses in general, all the constitution, all relations of objects in space and time, indeed space and time themselves would disappear, and as appearances they cannot exist in themselves, but only in us" ("The Transcendental Aesthetic" 168). For Kant, thinking, knowing, and breathing humans are separated by a gap between their own representations, intuitions, impressions, and the object itself, or *noumenon*. Kant measures this distance in sublime aesthetics: "All that we can say is that the object lends itself to the presentation of a sublimity discoverable in the mind. For the sublime, in the strict sense of the word, cannot be contained in any sensuous form, but rather concerns rational ideas…" (*Critique of Judgement* 300). The sensation of the sublime when faced with an object of massive scale is not based in the object itself, but in the mind's own incapacity to attenuate it. Yet, nonetheless, environmental and infrastructural particles (carcinogens for instance) are already entering our bodies, whether we attenuate them or not.

Enmeshment is a way to reinterpret this aesthetic-experiential distance from the object. In *The Ecological Thought*, Morton writes, "We can't spit out the disgusting real of ecological enmeshment. It's too close and too painful for comfort" (124). As a

[37] For further analysis of enmeshment, see Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, 124.

heuristic, Morton refers to the "ontological slogan" engraved in the side mirrors of vehicles, "OBJECTS IN THE MIRROR ARE CLOSER THAN THEY APPEAR" (*Hyperobjects* 27). Objects are already bypassing our attention, often obliquely, but in very real terms, interacting with us. What, then, is an aesthetics where infrastructures are enmeshing with us without our cozy transcendental distance from them? Moments of enmeshment require a critical engagement with phenomenology, and in particular the philosophical system of Martin Heidegger, which is a reflection on technology, tools, objects, and poetics. In much the same way that infrastructure has been evoked thus far, in *Being and Time,* Heidegger claims that when a tool breaks down, the thing we take for granted "becomes conspicuous" (102).[38] Because of this tendency for objects to float into the background of perception—then erupt back into view—Heidegger points to poetry's ability of "saying of the unconcealedness of what is" ("Origin of the Work of Art" 71). In "…Poetically Man Dwells…," Heidegger writes, "When the poetic appropriately comes to light, then man dwells humanly on this earth" (227). In Heidegger's words are a preoccupation with the potential dangers of technology: its divergence from its once-held proximity to poetics. He evokes the damming of the Rhine River: "What the river is now, namely a water-power supplier, derives from the essence of the power station" (321). While this dissertation approximates poetics and technology (infrastructure), I make two critical divergences from Heidegger's object poetics. First, Heidegger's essentialism denies material reality. The example of a power station on the Rhine River could be

[38] In *Toolbeing: Heidegger and the Metaphysic of Objects*, Graham Harman isolates this phenomenon in the following way: "For the most part, they [objects] work their magic upon reality without entering our awareness" (18).

synthesized—in the context of this dissertation—as *nature as infrastructure*, a process in which non-human nature is treated as a resource, which irrevocably alters its essence. Yet, environmental degradation notwithstanding, the water itself is still experienced as water, home to plants and fish and a water source for human life. Furthermore, the river is the source of discursive formations and collective enunciations that carry meaning regardless of its instrumentalization.[39] The point I make here is that while it is perhaps true that the river acts as infrastructure, it is nonetheless experienced as water, or as *infrastructure as nature*. This leads into the second divergence, which Morton synthesizes: "The refrigerator itself, let alone the light inside it, only exists when I am there to open the door" (13). The same phenomenological vacuum appears in the adage—"If a tree falls in the forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?"—and would lead us down a correlationist path, and in the extreme case, toward solipsism. This dissertation is concerned with precisely the opposite approach by asking how an object announces its presence or readiness after it has already taken control of our lungs, our intestines, our hands. I am concerned with the hum of a refrigerator that fades into the background.

By way of concluding this section, two caveats must be noted. First, is that the sublime cannot be avoided altogether as it continues to give rise to an aesthetics of megaprojects. Simply put, the sublime is enduring and adapting to "each period's critical caprice" (Rozelle 5). In the age of megaprojects, the sublime has shifted from craggy volcanoes to colossal industrial works, what Rob Nixon calls the fusing of "the

[39] For a wide-ranging volume on Latin American rivers, see Mutis and Pettinaroli's *Troubled Waters*, 2013.

technological sublime with the sacralizing of spectacle" (158). A question more accurately posed would be how does the sublime pave over the complex entanglements of the human and non-human, and where are the latter given voice? The second caveat is that the quantum mesh-world theorized by Morton provides insufficient evidence of exactly where concentrations of enmeshment take place, and where, for that matter, this mesh pulls apart or is eradicated altogether. Morton's supposition of "non-locality" of the mesh fails to capture the truly territorial aspects of megaprojects, the spaces they create and stratify. For this reason, the following section attempts to draw a line from these concepts—enmeshment and viscosity—to the assemblage.

Assemblages

If we are to continue with Tsing's concept as "open-ended assemblages of entangled ways of life," we must define what an assemblage is and ask how its concept can contribute to the analytic framework for the literary inquiry of megaprojects. This final section grapples with the manifold meanings of assemblages in the works of Deleuze and Guattari, along with theoretical approaches that have expanded upon their co-authored works. "Assemblage" is translated from the French word *agencement* (arrangement), which is a translation from the German word *Komplex* (complex).[40] Deleuze and Guattari employ the concept of the *assemblage* by moving away from the Oedipal triangle of Freud (father, mother, child) and instead toward a materialist psychology applicable to the historical moment of capitalism. Rebuking Freudian

[40] For a detailed analysis of the development assemblage theory, see Buchanan, "Assemblage Theory and its Discontents," 382–392.

psychoanalysis, Deleuze and Guattari write, "It is not possible to attribute a special form of existence to desire, a mental or psychic reality that is presumably different from material reality of social production" (*Anti-Oedipus* 30). This is the theoretical crux of this dissertation: psychological contents found in literature are entangled with material changes in the land.

Deleuze and Guattari's impact on Latin American and Caribbean thought should not be understated, nor should Latin America's impact on them.[41] After publishing *A Thousand Plateaus*, Guattari travelled throughout Brazil with Brazilian psychoanalyst Suely Rolnik, with whom he co-authored *Molecular Revolution in Brazil* (1986). At the end of a lecture circuit, Guattari reflects on the opportunity afforded to him to redefine his theoretical divergence from Freud's framework of desire as lack confirming for him that psychological lack was indeed "an effect of the market, an effect of the production of consumption: a lack produced, invented and injected" (428).[42] Desire for plenitude, instead of desire as lack, allows Deleuze and Guattari to analyze the material world without diverting to psychological or linguistic structures. The Centro Félix Guattari in Uruguay, a center founded in 2000, practices schizoanalysis, which, as opposed to traditional psychoanalysis, moves away from reductionism and toward "ontological heterogeneity" (61 *Chaosophy*). Perhaps the most well-known adaptation of Deleuze and

[41] See Olkowski and Ferreyra, *Deleuze at the End of the World: Latin American Perspectives.*

[42] In *Kafka*, Deleuze and Guattari write, "Not a desire-lack, but desire as a plenitude, exercise and functioning, even in the most subaltern of workers" (56).

Guattari's work in Latin America appears in Eduard Glissant's *Poetics of Relation*, in which Glissant adapts Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome to the Caribbean:

> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari criticized notions of the root and, even perhaps, notions of being rooted. The root is unique, a stock taking all upon itself and killing all around it. In opposition to this they propose the rhizome an enmeshed root system, a network of spreading either in the ground or in the air, with no predatory rootstock taking over permanently. (11)

Glissant's poetics of relation moves toward a relational aesthetics of errantry and exile as opposed to a strictly national literature.[43] Glissant claims that thinking in terms of a rhizome is incapable of "overturning the order of the world" (11–12), and in fact, his use of the term "enmeshed" is essential here, for he evokes both the positive and negative powers of enmeshment. Rhizomes are not inherently freeing, as rhizomatic enmeshments exists as dominating forces. For this reason, I examine the concept of the assemblage as it arranges tap-root systems (centralized and monolithic) in direct contact with rhizomatic systems (de-centralized and fluid) within the literary work.

Assemblages populate the co-authored works of Deleuze and Guattari and thus require a transversal reading to elucidate their manifold meanings.[44] In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari claim that assemblages are comprised of tetravalent axes:

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[43] See Neal Allar, "Rhizomatic Influence," for an anti-geneaological reading of Deleuze in the works of Glissant.

[44] See Spadaccini and Talens, *Through the Shattering Glass*, for an example of a transversal reading of Miguel de Cervantes' works.

> On a first, horizontal axis, an assemblage comprises two segments, one of content, the other of expression. On the one hand it is a machinic assemblage of bodies, of actions and passions, an intermingling of bodies reacting to one another; on the other hand it is a collective assemblage of enunciation, of acts and statements, of incorporeal transformations attributed to bodies. Then on a vertical axis, the assemblage has both territorial sides, or reterritorialized sides, which stabilize it, and cutting edges of deterritorialization, which carry it away. (88)

In this definition, Deleuze and Guattari answer the question of how language and materiality "intermingle" in a given temporal and spatial arrangement. Providing further clarity, Ian Buchanan writes, "At its most basic the assemblage combines material 'nondiscursive multiplicities' and expressive 'discursive multiplicities'" (*Assemblage Theory and Method* 33). An assemblage is a social ontology of immanence, as opposed to a non-ontology of transcendence, like that of Kant. In the assemblage, materiality—whether an atom or an entire ecosystem—is not closed off from expressive acts that articulate together with them in a given time and place.

Deleuze and Guattari borrow extensively from their readings of literary works by Marcel Proust, Maurice Blanchot, and Franz Kafka, and in fact, claim that the assemblage is the "perfect object for the novel" (*Kafka* 81). Why is this so? Mabel Moraña explains that "the notion of the book as a *literary machine* that connects with others [*literary machines*] for the production of meaning, a process that in no way develops without the articulation of multiple domains" (4). Literature does not fall outside of material culture or environmental phenomena, but is instead articulated within

existing contexts, and, importantly, shapes new ones in the process, a similar formulation to that of Fredric Jameson.[45] Moraña writes,

> the literary work is understood as a complex system of assemblages that is by nature always fluid, unfinished, and unstable. The essential operation is that of *plugging into*, of producing connections and circuits that "transmit intensities"—not definite meanings, but significant fluxes that constantly defy our expectations and redefine the horizons of rationality, emotion, and imagination. (4)

The literary works that I analyze in this dissertation highlight where people, infrastructures, and non-human natures "plug into"—become entangled with—one another. Buchanan and Marks point out that Deleuze and Guattari are interested in the "in-between" spaces of literature "which are frequently elided" (*Deleuze and Literature* 7). This is the formula for literary analysis: the in-between spaces produced by megaprojects where nature is not "out there," but already entwined within a complex network of human and non-human life. In the following chapters, I analyze these in-between spaces of the literary text, where infrastructure acts as nature and enmeshes with the bodies of those who live nearest the Chuquicamata mine, Panama Canal, and Zona Franca of Manaus.

Conclusion

This chapter has laid out a theoretical framework for analyzing the literature of megaprojects. First, by situating this analysis within a rich and diverse body of Latin

[45] See Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 82.

American literature, we more readily understand how megaprojects are constructed within extant spatial and environmental realities. The dialectical method allows for a non-romantic reading of space and non-human nature, as it positions humans as both products and producers, victims and agents, of environmental change. As this dissertation will show, the spatial and environmental elements of megaprojects further explicate how agency and victimhood are distributed asymmetrically nearest megaprojects, negatively affecting vulnerable communities, while at the same time, claiming the betterment of society.

But where does agency or victimhood take place? This chapter has taken a closer look at infrastructure to answer this question. This dissertation identifies infrastructure in water, plants, and geologic strata. This peculiar characteristic of infrastructure has been described as follows: nature as infrastructure and infrastructure as nature. By expanding the meaning of infrastructures in this way, we better understand the viscous structures of which they are part and parcel. While infrastructure is indeed a thing, it is also a relation between things, and therefore requires a multi-scaled approach. Assemblage theory—in particular its grounding in literary analysis—constitutes a framework for understanding the material and discursive elements that comprise a literary work. The following chapters mobilize the concepts of enmeshment and assemblage to illuminate untold stories of what, and more precisely who, manages to live despite the construction of colossal infrastructure projects in Panama, Brazil, and Chile.

CHAPTER II
The Chuquicamata Mine in Pablo Neruda's *Canto general*

In 2007, residents of the mining town of Chuquicamata, Chile were evacuated to the nearby town of Calama, forced out by pollution from the largest open-pit copper mine in the world. Next to the ghost town, the Chuquicamata mine continues to extract Chile's most profitable natural resource: copper.[46] Copper mining has consistently represented about a third of the national economy. Beyond its financial importance, mining has shaped Chile's cultural self-image as a symbol of industriousness, resilience, and patriotism. Chilean miners have appeared on the 500-peso note (1971),[47] in Chilean folk songs like Quilapayún's "Nuestro cobre (1974), on the big screen in the film *The 33* (2015), and even impersonated outside of Chile as the most popular Halloween costume in commemoration of the San José mining disaster of 2010.[48] This chapter focuses on miners and the landscape they populate in Pablo Neruda's *Canto general* (1950). The Chuquicamata mine, as Neruda writes it, reveals the complex relations that exist between the human and the non-human during environmental fallout. *Canto general* chronicles a lifetime of first-hand experience travelling across Latin America and serving as senator for the Partido Comunista in Northern Chile. In this chapter, I read *Canto general* as foregrounding the previously inconspicuous relationships between the human and the

[46] See Ibáñez Carvajal's article "Ser chuquicamatino" that chronicles the displacement of the mining town of Chuquicamata due to airborne toxins.

[47] In 1971, the 500-peso note depicted a copper miner on the face and the Chuquicamata mine on the reverse. See Liebsch, "Billetes de Chile," 30 Nov 2012.

[48] See "Confessions of a fashionista," *Daily Mail*.

non-human that occur in the extractive industry. Neruda's miners find themselves in ontologically precarious situations, attached to non-human nature, fused with their tools, and vulnerable to toxification.

No mine is just a mine, but instead an assemblage of infrastructures, raw materials, geologies, and circuits (see fig. 2). However, the Chuquicamata mine is also composed discursively, as a theater of national heroics and a sacred site in the *atacameño* origin story. The Chuquicamata mine weighs so heavily on *Canto general* that Neruda bends his poetic style using juxtaposition, metonymy, a molecular/molar perspectival distinction, and finally enmeshement to examine the vast but often unseen aspects of mining. To analyze the text, I perform a strata-reading of *Canto general,* a method that foregrounds materiality and the poetic expression of the extractive industry of mining. This method is influenced by Deleuze and Guattari and Mabel Moraña. *Canto general,* and in particular Canto XXXVIII, which takes place at the Chuquicamata mine, predicts environmental fallout and toxification in Northern Chile. I claim that Neruda complicates environmental collapse in the region by moving away from the nature/culture divide by highlighting the enmeshed character of the human and non-human in copper mining.

To support these claims, this chapter considers the Chuquicamata mine to be an assemblage, and thus the point of departure for this chapter is assemblage theory. Largely derived from readings of Deleuze and Guattari, assemblage theory charts out the intersections and divergences of material and discursive forms. Yet it is Deleuze and Guattari's interest in literature that is instructive for analyzing human and non-human relations. Fictional texts appear across Deleuze and Guattari's *oeuvre* as primary sources in their analysis of assemblages and of how discourse and materiality coalesce into

colossal structures and break apart to create new ones. Mabel Moraña analyzes assemblages and literature along similar lines: "the literary work is understood as a complex system of assemblages that is by nature always fluid, unfinished, and unstable" (4). The constant change and reinterpretation of literary works by readers from different moments in history contributes to their open-ended nature. On the one hand, assemblages allow readers to consider ways in which a literary work "plugs into" and contributes to a larger, constantly changing environmental narrative. On the other hand, assemblages point the reader to the material processes described in the work itself. This is the double-articulation that is central to the analysis of this chapter. Neruda's *Canto general* "plugs into" the Chuquicamata mine and illuminates the peculiar human and non-human relations that emerge.

Important to this reading of Chuquicamata in *Canto general* is the theory of strata. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari read Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Lost World* to explain their theory:

> Strata are Layers, Belts. They consist of giving form to matters, of imprisoning intensities or locking singularities into systems of resonance and redundancy, of producing upon the body of the earth molecules large and small and organizing them into molar aggregates. Strata are acts of capture, they are like "black holes" or occlusions striving to seize whatever comes within their reach! They operate by coding and territorialization upon the earth; they proceed simultaneously by code and by territoriality. (40)

Deleuze and Guattari's bio-geologic definition of strata expresses more than geologic significance but extends into a general approach to the process of stratification. Discourse, narrative, or poetry, stratify forming stanzas, sub-sections, genres, sub-genres, and even a literary canon. In order to understand the particular way *Canto general* provides testimony for marginalized miners, I highlight Neruda's positioning of miners within an ever-changing process of stratification at the Chuquicamata mine. There is no mining without strata.

Chuquicamata and *Literatura minera*

Copper extraction at Chuquicamata predates Spanish conquest. In fact, the Atacaman word "Chuquicamata" refers to the territorial limit of the Chucos—and also the point of the lance, a double meaning Neruda alludes to in *Canto general*. During the colonial period, as Alexander Sulotov notes, the Chuquicamata mine was left untouched by early colonial extraction and, in contrast to mining regions around Potosí, Bolivia, Guanajuato, Mexico, and Ouro Preto, Brazil, the migration of enslaved Africans and *mitayo* labor is undocumented.[49] Rather, the Chuquicamata mine was a development of the early twentieth century. After the War of the Pacific (1879–1904), Chile made a massive landgrab; western Bolivia and southern Peru became Northern Chile. The cities of Antofagasta, formerly Bolivia, and Arica, formerly Peru, became Chile's ports for a booming saltpeter industry. After the saltpeter came the copper.

[49] Sulotov writes, "Durante la Colonia, este mineral tiene poco interés para los españoles, por su baja ley y escaso valor del cobre" (During colonialism, this mineral deposit received little interest from the Spanish because of its low grade and scant value of copper; 137).

It was not until 1886, bolstered by the expansive zeal of the War of the Pacific, that the Chilean government sent exploratory commissions to the Atacama Desert. Alejo Gutiérrez-Viñuales notes, "Allí surgen las primeras descripciones detalladas de las explotaciones de las minas de cobre de Chuquicamata y de San José del Abra beneficiadas artesanalmente por un sinnúmero de pequeños propietarios y pirquineros[50] que operaban las mismas vetas y piques que, desde épocas prehispánicas, habían originado la actividad minera en esta área" (It is here where the first detailed descriptions of the operation of the copper mines of Chuquicamata and San José del Abra are found, which benefitted from innumerable small landowners and *pirquineros* that operated the same veins and digs that were, since the pre-Columbian period, the origins of mining activity in the region; 78). In 1901, the *Engineering and Mining Journal* cited a "curious" copper deposit in the Atacama region (Sutolov 137), and after the formation of the Chile Exploration Company, the second decade of the twentieth century marked the beginning of the period of Gran Minería del Cobre in Chile, a period that continues today (Gutiérrez-Viñuales 78).

By the mid-1920s, the Chuquicamata mine was representative of US imperial expansion in Chile. Daniel Guggenheim of museum fame[51] bought the Chuquicamata mine in 1910 along with other mining subsidiaries. Ricardo A. Latcham's *Chuquicamata estado yankee* (1926) and Marcial Figueroa's *Chuquicamata: La tumba del chileno* (1928) chronicle the expansion of US interests in Northern Chile, as well as the horrible

[50] A *pirquinero* is an itinerate miner.

[51] See O'Brien, "'Rich beyond the Dreams of Avarice,'" 122.

working conditions of miners and their families living in the company town of Chuquicamata. Reading like *proto-testimonio*, Latcham and Figueroa's works build upon memories of visiting, working, and living in Chuquicamata during the first decade of its operation, what Figueroa called the "horas negras" (dark hours). Latcham is astounded upon arrival to Chuquicamata, what he describes as "la colosal maquinaria en las distintas secciones del establecimiento, levantada con el gran capital yanqui, y el moderno sistema de elaboración de inventiva alemana" (the colossal machinery in the various sections of the worksite, raised by immense yankee capital and the modern system of production by the inventive Germans; 12). As in the United States of the 1920s, life and labor was segregated at Chuquicamata (see fig. 3 and 4), and Chileans were treated as sub-human, as slaves, "hasta rebajarlo a la condición del animal" (lowering them to the conditions of an animal; 13). The Chilean workers, mestizos and indigenous, were referred to as "Yelow Belies."[52] It becomes clear that racialized labor and abuse intersected with toxicity, which turned Chuquicamaya into "una enorme tumba para sepultar una raza" (an enormous tomb to bury a race; 14). Omnipresent dust from the open pit mine, fumes from treatment plants, and the proximity of the worker's barracks contributed to an overall "salud quebrantada" (broken health; 15) in Chuquicamata. Latcham considers the built environment of Chuquicamata "a menudo menos, duermen cuatro individuos, en una atmósfera no solamente viciada por la respiración de ellos sino por las emanaciones de las fábricas de ácidos y los gases de los hornos" (more than often, four individuals sleep together, where they are not only stricken by the breathing of other workers, but also

[52] I use Figueroa's spelling here. An alternative spelling is Yellow Bellies.

from the emissions of the acid factory and fumes from the burners; 126). Pleuropneumonia, rheumatism, and dengue fever commonly ravaged workers, and in particular, children, whose mortality was strikingly high.

Chuquicamata estado yankee and *Chuquicamata: La tumba del chileno* fit within a larger body of mining literature that extends well beyond Northern Chile. Subterranean narratives have served a wide range of discursive functions in Western thought, such as transformation and enlightenment, as in the case of Plato's Allegory of the Cave, or imagination in the case of Cervantes' Cave of Montesinos. Miners populate the pages of Émile Zola's *Germinal* (1885) and Upton Sinclair's *King Coal* (1917) in the French and US traditions. Latin American *literatura minera* extends from the Southern Andes to Northern Mexico, as what John Beverly identifies as the "novela social, novela proletaria, realismo social, o realismo socialista" (social novel, proletariat novel, social realism, socialist realism; 167).[53] *El tungsteno*, by César Vallejo, is emblematic of socialist realism that structures much of the mining literature from the first half of the twentieth century. Chilean mining literature[54] from the same period, like *Sub-terra* (1904) by Baldomero Lillo, *Cobre: cuentos mineros* (1941) by Gonzalo Drago, and *Norte Grande* (1944) by Andrés Sabella share Vallejo's anti-imperialist and socialist realist narrative. These works glorify the miners that work below the surface of the earth, divided by their

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[53] See Salazar Espinoza's essay, "El realismo social y metáforas del socavón en la novela minera peruana," which analyzes key metaphors in Peruvian mining literature and serves as point of reference for the pan-Andean literary tradition.

[54] See Rodríguez, *Antología del cuento minero chileno*; see also Bahamonde, *Antología del cuento nortino*.

skills, but united by the narrative of their struggle.

Mining literature is circumscribed by an overarching critique of Latin American extractivism, a key term for this chapter. Macarena Gomez-Barris' *The Extractive Zone* defines extractivism with haunting clarity: "extractivism references colonial capitalism and its afterlives: extending from its sixteenth-century emergence until the present day" (xvi). In *This Changes Everything*, Naomi Klein writes that extractivism is "based on the premise that life can be drained indefinitely, and…specializes in turning living systems into garbage, whether it's the piles of 'overburden' lining the roads in the Alberta tar sands, or the armies of discarded people roving the world looking for temporary work" (442). Shared across definitions of extractivism is a focus on the commodification of non-human nature. Ramón Grosfoguel reminds us that in extractivism there is an opacity linked to the Western notion of non-human nature that "sigue al pie de la letra el concepto occidentalocéntrico de 'naturaleza'" (follows lockstep the Western-centric concept of 'nature'; 129). Epistemologically, extractivism is the substantiation of Eurocentric ways of knowing. It is also, according to Grosfoguel, "una forma de ser y estar en el mundo, es decir, es una forma de existencia, es una ontología" (a way of being in the world, which is to say, it is a form of existence, an ontology; 137). Extractivism tends to be trapped by instrumental reason. Thus, analysis of the effects of extractivism must move beyond this distinction and bring forward epistemologies and ontologies that are produced in these overlapping domains.

Chuquicamata in *Canto general*

The 2009 film *Neruda* by Pablo Larraín describes the late-1940s atmosphere in

which Neruda wrote and published *Canto general*. Neruda evades capture by detective Óscar Peluchonneau, the investigative arm of President Gabriel González Videla and a literary fabrication of Neruda's own making. During this time, Neruda served in the Chilean National Assembly as a representative of the Partido Comunista in Tarapacá and Antofagasta (1945–1948), where the Chuquicamata mine is located. Miner strikes and government retaliation, particularly against socialists and communists, shaped the poetic project of *Canto general*. To characterize *Canto general* as mining literature, however, would be a mischaracterization of one of Latin America's most well-known poetic works. Instead, this section performs a strata-reading, which foregrounds non-human nature in its dynamic process that is both separate and constitutive of human activity.

Canto general has been described as an encyclopediia, panorama, personal travel narrative, and *crónica*.[55] This section analyzes some of the critical work that analyzes Neruda's environmental poetics. In *Earth Tones*, Durán and Safir name Neruda a "Nature Poet." This moniker originates from their dialectical reading of Neruda's *Residencia en la tierra* and *Canto general*. Durán and Safir, suggesting that to be a Nature Poet is to navigate the Cartesian divide: "the world outside his own psyche" and the "inner world of his own being" (33). The inner world, according to this reading, is defined "in a process of synthesis, from the poet's external environment" (33). In this section, I write against this interpretation, claiming that Neruda does not distinguish between inner and outer worlds of humans. Rather, Neruda writes the human enmeshed with non-human materiality that is particular of the far-from-stable ecosystem at Chuquicamata. In

[55] See Santí's substantial introduction to the Cátedra edition of *Canto general* (13–93).

Reading and Writing the Latin American Landscape, Beatriz Rivera-Barnes points out that "ecological challenges that Latin America is facing in the twenty-first century were already contained in *Canto general*, which was published in 1950" (146). I follow Rivera-Barnes by considering *Canto general* prescient for the times we live in, times of environmental collapse.

Canto XXXVIII of "Libertadores" is where this critique focuses. Populated by prominent figures of Latin American liberation movements—Caupolicán, Lautaro, Bernardo O'Higgins, Toussaint L'Ouverture, José Martí, and César Augusto Sandino, to name a few— "Libertadores" is a hagiography. But nestled within this hagiography is Cantos XXXVIII, which diverges from the encyclopedic or hagiographic and shifts toward the acute complexities of a copper mine—Chuquicamata. The banded layers of rock, flysch, sediment, and, in this case, copper, constitute the substrate of Neruda's Canto XXXVIII. In fact, Neruda writes "Hacia Recabarren" as a geologist, an archivist of territories and strata. This approach is made evident in the first lines of the sub-section ("La tierra, el metal de la tierra" [The earth, the metal of the earth]), in which Neruda lays out a perspectival system (a poetic self and a distant landscape) voicing a dynamic earth system below an extractive territory. What was once a peaceful landscape of Northern Chile ("paz ferruginosa" [ferruginous peace]), will, in the immediate future, be turned to commodities like a "lanza, lámpara o anillo" (lance, lamp, or ring). Neruda's use of *lanza* is pointed, for in the metonymy of "lanza" is the trace of the Atacama double meaning of "chuqui": lance and border. The poet and chronicler signals to the reader that they are entering a violent territory in three interrelated ways. First is the abuse and horrific working conditions endured by miners referenced in "Hacia Recabarren" ("Cada pétalo

de oro fue arrancado con sangre" [Every petal of gold was torn out with blood]). Secondly, these conditions are part and parcel of a global extractive industry that exports violent armaments of war ("Cada metal llene un soldado" [every metal contains a soldier]) that leave Northern Chile. Thirdly, Northern Chile begins to see the effects of slow violence, the imperceptibly protracted violence caused by environmental pollution at Chuquicamata mine.

Neruda moves beyond landscape and into ecology on a grander scale. He focuses on geologic and celestial stratification. In other words, Neruda follows elements, in this case light, through the process of stratification that takes place under the ground ("hundida y enterrada") and deep in outer space. In the following stanza of "Hacia Recabarren," Neruda describes these strata in movement and transformation. What was *la tierra* in the preceding stanza is now *el mineral* (the mineral deposit). Neruda writes,

> El mineral fue como estrella
> hundida y enterrada.
> A golpes de planeta, gramo a gramo,
> fue escondida la luz.
> Áspera capa, arcilla, arena
> cubrieron tu hemisferio.[56]

A strata-reading foregrounds materiality. Neruda brings this out through a pervasive shift between the molecular and the molar. The molecular is poeticized in terms of its constitutive parts ("gramo a gramo" [gram by gram]). Molar, on the other hand, is a

[56] The mineral was like a star,
fallen and buried.
With the planet's blows, gram
by gram, its light was concealed.
Harsh stratum, clay, sand
Covered your hemisphere.

broad poetics, one of totality ("Áspera capa, arcilla, arena / cubrieron tu hemisferio" [Harsh *stratrum,* clay, sand / covered your hemisphere]).[57] This shift between the molecular and the molar is accomplished rhetorically through juxtaposition like in the following formula: gram by gram/planetary collision. Within this rhetorical structure, light is carried in stellar dust and consolidates into molar bands that create the substrate of Northern Chile. In "El cobre," light passes through another articulation as copper wiring. Neruda arrives ("Yo llegué al cobre, a Chuquicamata" [I went to the copper, to Chuquicamata]) by the light in the mine that illuminates the working hours of night ("la inmensa mina resplandecía" [the immense mine glittered]). The celestial, then the geologic, then the infrastructural are all stratified light that has been captured by the Chuquicamata mine. Light anchors the reading of the first two sub-sections of Canto XXXVIII, and ultimately tethers celestial and geologic strata to extractive infrastructure.

Overlapping these strata, Neruda introduces yet another territorial formation: indigenous territory. In Atacaman folklore, a Kunza hunter slays a golden condor, *el dios de los metales* (The God of Metals) and receives vast copper deposits in return. "100 años de Chuqui," a video commemorating Chuquicamata's 100 years of production, recounts this story: "El área recorrida de la lanza es el tamaño final de la gigantesca mina Chuquicamata" (The distance travelled by the lance is the size of the gigantic Chuquicamata mine) ("100 años en 15 minutos"). This origin story is referenced in Neruda's sub-section "El cobre." When Neruda closes his eyes, the light dims and he sees the pre-extractive origins of Chuquicamata: "Cerré los ojos: sueño y sombra / extendían

[57] Emphasis added.

sus gruesas plumas / sobre mí como aves gigantes (I closed my eyes: sleep and shadow / spread their massive wings / over me like gigantic birds)." Whereas Codelco, the current owner of the mine, use the Kunza text to mythologize the Chuquicamata mine, Neruda's use of the story is distinct. He returns to the imagery of the lance in subsequent reference to the *atacameño* origin story:

> la oblicua estrella, el penetrante
> planeta, como una lanza,
> me arrojaban un rayo helado
> de fuego frío, de amenaza.[58]

The lance is like a cold flash, a warning ("de amenaza"). I read this warning in two ways. First, that Neruda is signaling to an inconspicuous territory that operates within extractive industry. To borrow the concept of Edward Said and Gómez-Barris, the indigenous territory is an "overlapping territory."[59] And second, Neruda implies an escape from the extractive assemblage. The Kunza origin story is a "line of flight," or an interstice within strata. Owing to the general tone of Canto XXXVIII, this potential escape can be only inferred, as the Chuquicamata swallows everything around it.

"La noche en Chuquicamata" chronicles Neruda's descent into the Chuquicamata mine. In Dantesque fashion, the earth below the poet's feet bleeds ("y ante mis ojos vi los muros implacables, / el cobre derribado en la pirámide. / Era verde la sangre de esas tierras" [and before my eyes I saw the implacable walls / the devastated copper in a

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[58] The oblique star, the penetrating
planet, hurled at me, like a spear,
an icy thunderbolt
of cold fire, fraught with doom.

[59] See Said's *Culture and Imperialism*, 7.

pyramid. / The blood of those lands was green]). The infernal sub-section shares its sublime aspect with "Las Alturas de Machu Picchu": vast in scale, unsettling in its grandeur. The poet and reader alike are awestruck by the grandiosity of the mine, and like in Dante's *Inferno*, Neruda is ushered through the layers of earth and human suffering ("Paso a paso, entonces, la sombra / me llevó / de la mano hacia el Sindicato" [Step by step, then, the shadow/ led me / by the hand of the Union]). Where Neruda differs from Dante, however, is his dual focus on the human and non-human suffering that takes place in the mine. In the lines, "Aquella noche no vi / desfilar su herida sin número / en la costa cruel de la mina" (That night I didn't see / the countless wounds file by / along the mine's cruel rim), Neruda opens an ecocritical reading, suggesting it is not only the workers who suffer, but the earth itself whose "huesos minerales" (mineral bones) are being broken.

The first three sub-sections of Canto XXXVIII trace an arrival to Northern Chile. In more pointed terms, it is a literary approach. How to poeticize Northern Chile without alienating the poet, the landscape, and the people that inhabit it? How can one situate a mine within a territory of diverse spatial and temporal scales? By way of responding to these questions, Neruda unearths within the first three verses of Canto XXXVIII two central aspects: stratification of the earth and indigenous territoriality. On the one hand he mobilizes a dynamic earth system where celestial light, planetary collision, erosion, and excavation tell a story of how strata form part of an extractive assemblage. They break down into the molecular and scale up to colossal molar aggregates. On the other hand, Neruda aims lines of flight away from Chuquicamata via indigenous origin stories. The Kunza imagery imbedded into the stanzas of the first three sub-sections tells the story about how territories emerge, overlap, and evade stratification. Whereas the first three

sub-sections of Canto XXXVIII define an approach to thinking of strata and indigenous territoriality, the remaining sub-sections in Canto XXXVIII signal a shift in focus to the miner's body.

Miners in *Canto general*

In Chile, artisan miners are called *pirquineros*.[60] The term *al pirquén* refers to mining on a small-scale by one or a few miners. But when large-scale mining took the place of the *al pirquén* system in the early twentieth century, the *pirquineros* remained. Those who remained came to form a part of the mining proletariat, the protagonists of *Canto general*. Neruda was not the only poet of the Chilean left to exalt miners,[61] but what is interesting in Neruda is his rendering of miners as a collective mass of human bodies ("el material humano" [a human mass]). I liken Neruda's aesthetic massification of the body to that of Brazilian photographer Sebastião Salgado's series *Workers* (1993) (see fig. 5).[62] In the penultimate stanza of "La noche en Chuquicamata," Neruda writes, "Era una multitud grasienta, / hambre y harapo, soledades, / la que cavaba el socavón" (It

[60] Milton Godoy Orellana examines non-industrial mining in Northern Chile, writing, "se inicia en el mundo colonial y–con sus variantes y transformaciones–persiste en la minería contemporánea" (begins in the colonial world and, with its variants and transformations, persists in contemporary mining; 31). See Godoy Orellana, "Minería popular y estrategias de supervivencia."

[61] In *Epopeya de las comidas y bebidas chilenas*, Pablo De Rhoka exalts the Andean miner writing, "en la sierra minera, entre mineros, fuerte y heroicos, o conversando / con los burros sagrados que forjan en la minería" (in the sierra, among the miners, strong and heroic, or conversing / with the sacred donkeys that forge in the mine; 180).

[62] See also Salgado's *Other Americas*, in which Salgado's photos chronicle a journey across Latin America much the same way as Neruda in *Canto general*.

was a grimy multitude/hunger and shreds, solitude/ that excavated the gallery). This protean materiality of human bodies can be found throughout the entirety of *Canto general*. Section V, "La arena traicionada," for example, begins in homage to Chilean miners, pointing out their uncanny proximity to the natural resources they extract: "Precipitarse abajo / en hundimientos, aguas, minerales, catástrofes" (without closing his eyes, not sounding/ the depths, waters, minerals, catastrophes; 293). Miners are likened to a material mass ("pisoteado material humano" [downtrodden human matter]) blended with the tools and natural elements they extract from the earth. This is the point of departure of this section. I identify in Neruda's poetics a double articulation embodied by Chilean miners. On the one hand, Chilean miners are a force of potential energy and destruction, and thus are protagonists of a what has been called the metabolic rift that grows between the earth's ability to regenerate itself and the social forces that extract from it. On the other hand, miners are thrown into the processes of production wherein they become poisoned by the chemical infrastructures of mining and inhale dust particulate, pointing to a corporeal process of toxification that precludes subjectivity or individuation.

Neruda's transition to the corporeal is marked in sub-section four, "Los chilenos," where the principle rhetorical device for this shift is metonymy, which takes shape in the hands of miners. Neruda writes, "Tu mano fue como la geografía," "Todo eso fue tu mano," and "Tu mano fue la uña / del compatriota mineral (Your hand was like your geography, All that was your hand, Your hand was the fingernail / of the mineral compatriot.)." The miner's hand produces a territory, one that has been worked over, detonated, and dug out. The hand is metonymic for the labor process, which is distributed

across the various workspaces of the Chuquicamata mine. Neruda writes in the second stanza of "Los chilenos": "Anduvo por las maestranzas / manejando las palas rotas…y poniendo pólvora en todas / partes" ("He worked around the arsenals / wielding broken shovels / and setting gunpowder / everywhere). Broken shovels and dynamite are a reminder of the grueling and precarious working conditions at Chuquicamata mine that had been written about at length some thirty years prior. In the fifth stanza, however, Neruda evokes the metabolic power of miners ("a pulso, / a velocidad" [at full speed]) that shapes the territory of Northern Chile ("la recogió de la argamasa, la estableció entre las regions" [took it from the mortar, / established it in the regions]). The miner is working at full speed and all the while, reshaping Northern Chile.

The miner's body in Neruda is caught up within an earthly metabolism that pits geology and turn over time against one another, what Marx called the metabolic rift, a concept that has shaped discussions around capitalism and environmental fallout. In *Marx's Ecology*, John Bellamy Foster describes the metabolic rift as the "actual metabolic interaction between nature and society through human labor" and the "interdependent set of needs and relations brought into being and constantly reproduced in alienated form under capitalism" (158). Evidenced by his writing on Chuquicamata, Neruda writes along the very rift that is opening between celestial, geologic, and geographic strata. In "El héroe," Neruda examines the metabolic rift with startling complexity:

> No fue sólo firmeza tumultuosa
> de muchos dedos, no sólo fue la pala,
> no sólo el brazo, la cadera, el peso
> de todo el hombre y su energía:

fueron dolor, incertidumbre y furia
los que cavaron el centímetro
de altura calcárea, buscando
las venas verdes de la estrella,
los finales fosforescentes
de los cometas enterrados.[63]

There is a brief return to the light from the previous sub-sections, and it functions in the same manner: tethering the celestial and the geologic in "venas verdes" and "cometas enterrados." Neruda's characterizes the miner as both victim and agent. The heroic miner, like all heroes, possesses both the cumulative suffering of a people on his body ("fueron dolor, incertidumbre y furia" [it was grief, the uncertainty and rage]), but also the potential energy of the entire human race ("el peso / de todo el hombre y su energía" [the burden/ the entire and his energy]). This socio-biologic reading of the metabolic rift allows the reader to see the body of miners caught within the machinery of extraction and environmental milieu in the very same moment.

Particularly instructive for this reading is Frank Riess's *The Word and the Stone*, which examines the fragmentation of the human body in Neruda's *Canto general*. Riess understands the relation between the human and non-human in *Canto general* as an

[63] It wasn't only the tumultuous firmness
of many fingers, not only the shovel,
not only the arm, the hip the burden
of the entire man and his energy:
it was grief, the uncertainty and rage
of those who excavated the centimeter
of calcareous heights, seeking
the star's green veins,
the phosphorescent recesses
of the buried comets.

instrumental set: "Tierra-Minerales-Hombre" (Earth-Minerals-Man).[64] This instrumental set positions the non-human as a means to an end, an instrument. Riess writes, "In this set the place of man in nature is defined as the climax of all the forms of nature" (3). Riess rightly identifies Neruda's self-aggrandizement and auto-fragmentation throughout *Canto general*. However, an instrumental set does not materialize in the final stanza of "El héroe:"

> Así fue como conociendo,
> entrando como a la uterina
> originalidad de la entraña,
> en tierra y vida, fui venciéndome:
> hasta sumirme en hombre, en agua
> de lágrimas como estalactitas,
> de pobre sangre despeñada,
> de sudor caldo en el polvo.[65]

Indeed, as Riess suggests, Neruda is on a path toward enlightenment, a fully realized Latin American humanity (*Hombre*). But as the poet moves through these strata, he evokes a sense of deep loss ("lágrimas como estalactitas" [teary like stalactites]), and this is where I signal a departure from Riess's reading of the instrumental set. As I analyzed in the previous section, Neruda is interested in the activity within strata themselves, whether celestial, geologic, or geographic. Neruda traces processes of stratification that

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[64] In the Canto *El gran océano*, Riess identifies the recurring instrumental formula "Océano-Ola-Hombre."

[65] And it was, so to speak, by knowing,
by entering the uterine originality
of the womb, in earth and in life,
that I began to die away:
until I immersed into man, into water
teart like stalactites,
like poor gushing blood,
like sweat fallen in the dust.

can apply across domains, to the human and non-human alike; for example, the transition from molecular to molar formations at Chuquicamata. A more complicated double articulation is taking place within the body in the latter sub-sections of Canto XXXVIII. The human body is fragmented into molecules that make possible the labor process of extractive industry, while at the same time being rendered into a molar formation, a protean materiality. The result of this double articulation is not the affirmation of a subject, but rather its impossibility.

Neruda poeticizes the body of the miners at Chuquicamata to complicate the human and non-human interface. He positions the Chilean miner at the center of a colossal metabolic rift that is opening between social and environmental forces. Humans are exhausting natural resources, and thus causing the metabolic rift to widen. This, however, is only part of Neruda's poetic project. What becomes clear in Neruda's poeticization of the metabolic rift is that the miners themselves are agents and victims of extractivism. Interestingly, this double articulation takes place on their bodies in two processes. Firstly, miners are fragmented into the body parts that do the bulk of the mining work: hands, fingers, arms, and hips. This process of alienation can be seen in terms of a move toward the molecular. The miners' bodies are rendered into parts to produce a larger whole, not the human, but the Chuquicamata mine. Secondly, miners are also rendered into a protean materiality that takes the shape of a colossal molar entity: "downtrodden human matter." Subjecthood is not endowed in either of these material states. If this is indeed the case, what type of humanity does Neruda document, affirm, and poeticize?

To answer this question, I follow Neruda out of the Chuquicamata mine and into a

larger mining context; to other mines, and to what he calls the "circuito del desierto" (the desert circuit). Accompanied by Elías Lafertte, a colleague and friend in the communist party in Northern Chile, the final four sub-sections of Canto XXXVIII take place outside of Chuquicamata, *en route* to Iquique ("azul y ascético" [blue and ascetic]) and to more remote mining regions in the northern-most deserts of Chile. Neruda identifies the assemblage character of Chuquicamata elsewhere, in a larger context of extraction, in the mining of nitrates and salt. I read in the final four sub-sections ("Oficios," "El desierto," "Nocturne," and "Las pampas") salient phenomena that cause the reader to rethink an environmentalist reading of Neruda i.e., human beings destroy nature and that is bad. Neruda is making a more inconspicuous claim about the relationship that exists between the human and the non-human.

Enmeshment complicates the metabolic rift by superseding categories of the social and natural. Neruda is particularly interested by the double-bind that miners find themselves in as they work in the arid regions and humid mines of Northern Chile. On the one hand, a metabolic rift grows between the human (social) and the non-human (natural) in the mining industry. But on the other hand, the human and non-human are inching ever closer to one another, cutting into one another. This is the reading I perform of Canto XXXVIII, which suggests Neruda is not solely criticizing extractivism, but identifying an ontological zone of enmeshment, where categories of the human and the non-human are blurred. Put in terms of a question, what system of reality—ontology—does copper mining produce in *Canto general*? In the following section, I analyze moments of enmeshment that take place in the last four sub-sections of Canto XXXVIII to complicate the relations between the human and the non-human in extractive industry

and trace in Neruda the potential lines of escaping these violent ontological zones.

The first zone of enmeshment exists between miners and their tools. This zone opens most clearly in "Oficios," in which Neruda and Lafertte travel across Chile's northern salt flats and nitrate mines where they encounter miners, and importantly, the shovels and pickaxes they wield:

> Me mostró Elías las palas
> de los derripiadores, hundido
> en las maderas cada dedo
> del hombre: estaban gastadas
> por el roce de cada yema.
> Las presiones de aquellas manos derritieron
> los pedernales de la pala,
> y así abrieron los corredores
> de tierra y piedra, metal y ácido,
> estas uñas amargas, estos
> ennegrecidos cinturones
> de manos que rompen planetas,
> y elevan las sales al cielo,
> diciendo como en el cuento,
> en la historia celeste: "Éste
> es el primer día de la tierra."[66]

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[66] Elías showed me
the minder' shovels,
every finger of man
worked into the wood,
worn by the friction of every fingertip
The pressure of those hands melted
the shovel's flint,
and that's how they opened galleries
of earth and stone, metal and acid,
these bitter fingernails, these
blackened belts
of hands that break planets,
and raise the salts to heaven,
saying as the story says,
in the celestial history: "This

Neruda uses the *derripiadores* to specify the saltpeter miners who work with shovels, and the metonym of the miners' hands in previous sub-sections is replaced by shovels that bear the markings of endless labor. The shift toward the non-human, to the markings that humans leave behind, tells the reader the story of enmeshment on a small scale. In the final stanza of "Oficios," Neruda claims the *derripiadores* are "el prototipo de la pala" (the prototype of the pickax). "[U]ñas amargas," referring to the small scale, leave deep depressions in the wood on shovels, an energy that is transferred through the end of the shovel. In this stanza, I read Neruda evoking the true essence of tools: their capacity to transfer energy. Yet in the very same stanza, this energy, with its capacity to break planets and lift salt to the heavens, transforms the *derripiadores* into "ennegrecidos cinturones / de manos" (blackened belts / of hands). Again, Neruda renders the miners into a protean materiality with the capacity rewrite environmental history of Northern Chile. But while the *derripiadores* indeed possess this power, Neruda reminds the reader that they are marginalized laborers that go unnoticed: "aquel que nadie vio antes" (the man whom no one saw before). Simultaneous with the miner's great powers is their marginalization.

The second example of enmeshment occurs by way of toxification from the nitrate mines, the very same toxicity for which the town of Chuquicamata was evacuated in 2007. The inherent toxicity of mining, as I have examined in the beginning of this chapter, can be detected across Chilean mining literature. I read in "El páramo"

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is the first day upon the earth."

(wasteland), the final sub-section of Canto XXXVIII, Neruda's focus on the intense poverty of mining regions, and their toxicity. He writes,

> En el páramo el hombre vivía
> mordiendo tierra, aniquilado.
> Me fui derecho a la madriguera,
> metí la mano entre los piojos,
> anduve por los rieles hasta
> el amanecer desolado,
> dormí sobre las tablas duras,
> bajé de la faena en la tarde,
> me quemaron el vapor y el yodo,
> estreché 1a mano del hombre,
> conversé con la mujercita,
> puertas adentro entre gallinas,
> entre harapos, en el olor
> de la pobreza abrasadora.[67]

The first example of enmeshment in "El páramo" comes in the form of dust particulate that fills the *derripiadores*' mouths —as well as their lungs—ultimately overtaking them, annihilating them. I read the ambiguity of "*el hombre*" as a reference to all of humanity that is enmeshed with the non-human, but in particular, those who live in the isolated

[67] In the wasteland man lived
biting the dust, annihilated.
I went straight to his lair,
thrust my hand amid the lice,
walked the rails to
the desolate dawn,
slept on hard planks,
came off the afternoon shift,
was burned by fumes and iodine,
shook man's hand,
walked with the lady of the house,
indoors among the chickens,
among the tatters, in the stench
of scorching poverty.

backlands of the extractive industry. While the stanza begins with the masculine generalization, what is perhaps most interesting about "El páramo" is Neruda's first and only reference to women in the entirety of Canto XXXVIII.[68] The conversation that takes place between Neruda and the "mujercita" is underscored by burning fumes and iodine that pollute the air. This extends the ontological zone of enmeshment beyond the mine and into the adjacent regions: the houses and the open spaces of the high desert. The toxification of the bodies of non-miners, in this case, women, parallels Ricardo A. Latcham's *Chuquicamata estado yankee* and Marcial Figueroa's *Chuquicamata: La tumba del chileno* some 20 years prior. In fact, Neruda's first-person account of the poverty of the miners in "El páramo" fits well within the social realism of *literatura minera*. Neruda's shift toward the reality of women, while brief, can be read as a premonition of the environmental fallout in the town of Chuquicamata, where not only miners were evacuated from the town, but also women, the elderly, and children.

The Nocturnal Desert as a Space of Resistance

How does Neruda escape these ontological zones of enmeshment that poison miners and poets? Liberation comes by way of "Nocturne," a sub-section between "El desierto" and "El páramo" that is structurally bracketed off from the rest of Canto XXXVIII. In poetic terms, a nocturne signals the fall of night. In "El cobre," night signals an escape from extractivism into darkness. Neruda opens a tabula rasa: a "la geografía desnuda de la noche" (naked geography of night) and "pura tierra" (pure land). I read the nocturnal

[68] This is largely due to the fact that mining in Chile has been historically gendered work.

desert as a plane that links Canto XXXVIII to other cantos within *Canto general,* and a place of pure creation, the stratification of the extractive industry. For example, Neruda likens the desert to the ocean, "hermana pura del océano" (pure sister of the ocean), which I read as a reference to "El gran océano," the final section of *Canto general*. Neruda writes the ocean ("tu extensión vigilada por el aire y la noche") in a similar fashion to the desert (Y amé el sistema de tu forma recta, / la extensa precisión de tu vacío"). Both the ocean and the desert are a generative plane of vast extension that allows for reimagining mercantilism, and shipping, and mining.

This generative plane allows for new formations and resistance to take shape, exemplified by Emilio Recabarren, the famed pro-union and communist leader from Northern Chile. In "El páramo," Neruda characterizes this plane as "espacio puro" (pure space) from which Emilio Recabarren emerges as the hagiographic referent of Canto XXXVIII. Recabarren appears from the nocturnal desert identified by "unos ojos entrecerrados / como lámparas indomables" (his squinting eyes / like indominable lamps), which is no doubt a reference to the first section of *Canto general*, "La lámpara en la tierra," which describes pre-Columbian flora and fauna. Recabarren is a labor organizer, prolific writer, and liberator and here can also be considered an environmental figure. This further consolidates just how Canto XXXVIII fits within "Libertadores" and the *Canto general* as a whole. But who holds the key to this liberational plane? The poet. A fair critique of Neruda would make mention of his poetic self-aggrandizement, but perhaps more productively, one should consider Neruda's poetry as identifying liberational space for his readers.

In contrast to the first four sub-sections of Canto XXXVIII, the final six sub-

sections mark a significant poetic shift from the mine itself to the bodies of the miners who labor in it. In these sub-sections, I read the miners as metonymic of a complex geography taking shape, which positions the miner at the center of a metabolic rift between extractive industry and earthly capacity to sustain it. Yet this divergence between the social and the natural caused by laborious exhaustion of non-human nature does not explain away the entirety of extractivism. Instead, ontological zones emerge from the megaproject in which miners, and all those nearby, find themselves enmeshed with tools and pollutants. It is not enough to simply mark the heroics of miners in *Canto general*, but instead to trace their agency and marginalization within the mining industry. By identifying these zones, Neruda helps us better understand the implications of environmental collapse.

Conclusion

This chapter reads the Chuquicamata mine in Neruda's *Canto general* as a complex assemblage of materials and discourse. Canto XXXVIII, a section within "Libertadores," takes a divergent turn from hagiography and into the interface between the human and non-human in extractive copper mining. This section can be read both as a part of *literatura minera*, but also must be read separately, and part of a larger work. By closely analyzing Canto XXXVIII, I point to the shift in scale Neruda uses to describe the Chuquicamata: from celestial and geologic to the shape of hands on a shovel and particulate in the lung. By shifting between these scales, Neruda is also able to uncover the hidden relations that occur between the human and the non-human at extraction sites.

In the first section I analyzed the territorial formation of Chuquicamata by way of

a strata-reading, which recognizes in Neruda's Northern Chile celestial and geologic strata, which are themselves moving within a dynamic system of change. Neruda is then able to position the miner at the center of a colossal metabolic rift. In the second section, I follow Neruda's scaling from the colossal to the human scale to examine the complex interface of the human and the non-human that transgresses ontological boundaries and creates spaces of domination. This chapter further exemplifies Rivera-Barnes's identification of Neruda's prescience on the topic of environmental disaster. This chapter, however, allows us to the see the vast scope of megaprojects as well as their ontological terraforming. Furthermore, reading Neruda's Canto XXXVIII in this way, we highlight hidden aspects of domination. In Neruda, domination occurs in zones of enmeshment, where marginalized peoples—miners and their families—are most acutely vulnerable to environmental collapse. Neruda does not simply write that the miner is heroic, but instead examines the price of this narrative of heroics. Perhaps after this reading, we will better understand Chilean folk band Quilapayún's song "Nuestro cobre," the lyrics of which read "[El cobre] mezclado con la sangre y con el alma de todo un pueblo pobre" ([Copper] mixed with the blood and soul of all poor people).

CHAPTER III
Enmeshed Landscapes: (Re)Constructing Canal Zone Aesthetics in *Las novelas canaleras*[69]

The early 1960s in Panama were marked by a series of protests against US military, political, and racial violence in and around the Canal Zone.[70] Some 20,000 Panamanians took to protest and riot and from this fermenting political unrest arose a new literary style: *La novela canalera*. The term *novela canalera,* as Frances Jaegar has written, refers in large part to Joaquín Beleño's Canal Novel trilogy *Luna verde, Curundú,* and *Los forzados de Gamboa*. According to Jaeger, "recae en la novela canalera la responsabilidad de construir los mitos fundacionales" (passed on in the Canal Novel [is] the responsibility of constructing foundational myths; 89), myths that are overshadowed in Panama due to the role of the United States in the independence of the country from Colombia in 1903, which presaged its economic and military omnipresence in the Republic of Panama from its inception.[71] In a less formal way, the Canal Novel is born of a cognizance of the Canal as an entity with colossal constructive and destructive

[69] This chapter was previously published as an essay in *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos* 53.3 (2019).

[70] Donoghue reminds us in *Borderland on the Isthmus* that on "November 3rd, 1959, following a Panamanian Independence Day celebration," Panamanians scaled the barbed wire fence in a "symbolic attempt to take back the borderland" (17). This was but one of many flag-planting demonstrations that led up to 1964, like in the 1958 Operation Sovereignty, which "represented, on one level, a serious protest against US empire and, on another, a giant high school prank" (17).

[71] For Jaeger the Canal Novel "tiene la misma función fundacional que las novelas románticas del siglo XIX que analiza Doris Sommer en *Foundational Fictions*" (has the same foundational function as the romantic novels of the 19th century that Doris Sommer analyses in *Foundational Fictions*).

powers, yet imbued with human, natural, and inorganic forces. Its mobilization as an agent within the existing US environmental imaginary in 1960s Panama confounds categories of the human and organic.

The Canal Novel departs from the sublime aesthetic motif that painted man as a small figure against the backdrop of a colossal and often tropical "nature," a motif that in its Kantian formulation is defined by a perceptive distance between the aesthetic object and the subject who interprets it. *Pueblos perdidos* (1963) by Gil Blas Tejeira, blurs the distinctions between the built and natural environment, excavating those submerged histories sunken by the construction of the Canal. In a similar way, *Los forzados de Gamboa* (1960) by Joaquín Beleño fuses the human body with the Canal Zone landscape, its plants, along with its infrastructures. Both works close the perceptive distance of traditional sublime aesthetics. Existing scholarship on the Canal Novels typically centers on the fraught racial dynamics they bring to light in negotiations of the nation or *panameñeidad*, highlighting the shifting hierarchies of native white and non-white Panamanians, West Indian immigrants, and US occupiers wrought by the Canal project. I chart the ways Gil Blas Tejeira and Joaquín Beleño mobilize landscape as a narratological tool in Panama's decolonial movement of the 1960s, and in doing so challenge imperial environmental and racial legacies in Panama.[72]

The discursive landscape leading up to the mid-1960s anti-imperialist movements imagines a Panama far removed from reality, an erratic mix of liberalism and nostalgia

[72] Watson and Szok have pointed out, for example, how the pro-*mestizaje*, anti-imperialist politics of Panama during the 1960s brought with it sustained anti-West Indies rhetoric, additionally problematizing Afro-descendant Panamanian relations with the light-skinned elite.

wherein poets, novelists, and critics served as important voices in political arenas and wrote Panamanian history in ways that served their political aims. As Peter Szok outlines, between independence from Colombia in 1903 and the early 1940s, nationalist intellectualism was dominated by a dual, and somewhat paradoxical, rhetoric of liberalism and nostalgia, through which "the nineteenth-century desire for liberalism and European progress spurred liberal theorists to forge a sense of identity around the notion of modernity" (117). The liberal politics of rapid modernization—catalyzed by the construction of the Canal and the influx of global capital—were countered by a narrative of "Hispanidad" that attempted to reclaim cultural sovereignty from both US imperialism and West-Indies Anglophone immigrants by looking back toward Spanish heritage.[73] This nostalgic intellectual movement was buttressed by a revitalized *ruralismo* that glorified the indigenous groups of Panama while alienating Afro-descendant populations (106), which during the early twentieth century had grown to compose the majority of the isthmus's inhabitants.[74] The political and intellectual disenfranchisement of growing Afro-descendant groups is a great irony of conservative Hispanism, insofar as the alienation of popular masses from intellectual discourse, in serving certain elitist political

[73] Ricardo Miró was among the leading intellectuals of this nostalgic movement, after which El Consurso Nacional de Literatura Ricardo Miró is named; two winners of the prize were Gil Blas Tejeira and Joaquín Beleño.

[74] In *El peligro antillano en la América Central. Defensa de una raza*, Olmedo Alfaro attributes the "descomposición del carácter nacional" (decomposition of the national character) to the Afro-Antillean migrant workers.

fictions, also advanced the political aims of the US occupation's policy of segregationism that no doubt operated under similar racist principles.[75]

In the early 1960s however, Tejeira and Beleño upend these intellectual trajectories, first by criticizing the rapid modernization brought by US intervention, and second by writing histories of non-elite populations that had heretofore been relegated to the periphery and seen as contaminating the Republic. While these novels take into account the lives of real people, as I will highlight further down, they achieve this aim by shifting the focus toward the landscape of the Canal Zone: a territory of 558 square miles, spanning five miles outward from the Canal, that remained under US control from 1903 to 1999. Scholarship on the Canal Novels has focused on the significance of the historical figures that populate them, as well as offered *transisthmian*, and marginalized diasporic approaches.[76] In *Dividing the Isthmus*, Ana Patricia Rodríguez claims the production of

[75] See Stephenson Watson's "Poetic Negrism and the National Sentiment of Anti-West Indianism and Anti-Imperialism in Panamanian Literature."

[76] Rodríguez writes in the Introduction to *Dividing the Isthmus*, "I offer the trope of *transisthmus*—an imaginary yet material space—as a spatial periodizing term and as a 'cultural provision' for reading Central American literatures and cultures outside of the categories that up to now have elided larger regional complexities" (2). Rodríguez further contextualizes the central American protest novel writing, "The copious production of the transisthmian social protest novels during a relatively short span of time speaks volumes about the imperialist conditions of possibility that gave rise to them and the critical counter-discourses that were available to Central American writers at the time" (46); In "The Panama Canal in the World of Walrond and Beleño," Pulido Ritter focuses his critique on "the migration of the marginalized" in the Canal Novel and questions "Is it possible to understand the Canal Novel as the basis for a trans-regional study which crosses national boundaries and corresponds (rather precisely) with that third phase of capitalism, which is also characterized by mass, inter-regional and trans-regional migration (the Caribbean and the Pacific) that has marked the migratory character of the Central American and Caribbean region, and, especially, the diasporic character of forced and voluntary Caribbean migration to the Isthmus?" (60).

transisthmian social protest novel in Panama "speaks volumes about the imperialist conditions of possibility that gave rise to them and the critical counter-discourses that were available to Central American writers at the time," and also, that one should "reread the genre as it speaks to twenty-first-century concerns regarding empire building in isthmus" (46, 44). In his essay "The Panama Canal in the World of Walrond and Beleño," Luis Pulido Ritter rightly points out that "the Canal is a problem that only concerns the romanticized version of the Panamanian nation […] the Caribbean, either by conscious omission or lack of interest, has never been contemplated in studies of Panamanian literature and, in particular, of the Canal Novel" (62). This essay borrows from these approaches in so far as the narratives of exploitation and marginalization are built into the landscape of the Canal Novel itself. By focusing attention on the Canal Zone landscape, we take into consideration how the introduction of massive infrastructure creates structures of power both with and among the humans that populate the Canal Novels, structures that often go unseen or are taken for granted in traditional nationalist imaginaries.

As Donald Moore, Anand Pandian and Jake Kosek write in their introduction to *Race, Nature, and the Politics of Difference*, "Landscape articulates both culture and nature, seer and scene. But equally at stake in landscape are the embodied practices that transform the objects of a proprietary gaze. A multiplicity of situated practices—of cultivators and pastoralists, slaves and colonists, labor migrants and adventure travelers—shapes both terrain and identity" (11). In the context of Panama, the proprietary gaze of the US Canal Authority, together with a nationalist optic of progress, can be said literally to possess the Canal Zone landscape. Yet the Canal Novels invert the human agency of

the practices Moore, Pandian, and Kosek speak of, allowing for *objects* in turn to transform activities carried out by people. Both the human and the non-human, organic and inorganic, are narrated within the landscapes of mid-twentieth-century Panama. Imported imperial flora like the *paja canalera*, local wildlife such as the *culebra*, as well as features of the canal zone's industrial and security complex like the *malla ciclón* (chain-link fence), paved boulevards, and colossal vessels stacked with shipping containers are all equally active elements of the landscape. Furthermore, Tejeira and Beleño show us that relations of power embedded in the landscape are hidden, thereby forcing us to call attention to that which renders them invisible. Inherent in the landscape of the Canal Zone is a problematic of space as explained by Henri Lefebvre in *The Production of Space*:

> space indeed speaks—but it does not tell all. Above all it prohibits [...] Space is at once result and cause, product and producer; it is also a stake, the locus of projects and actions deployed as part of specific strategies, and hence also the object of wagers on the future—wagers which are articulated, if never completely. (143)

The Canal Zone landscape functions within the dialectical model that Lefebvre maps out: the landscape is *produced*—for example, by civil engineering or the introduction of foreign plant species—while at the same time it is *producing* relations among those that live within and around this landscape. These relations, as the Canal Novels show us, shed light on the perpetuation of intragroup dynamics that occur among different national constituencies, as well as intergroup relations between Panamanians and *zonians* (US citizens born in the Canal Zone). We can better understand the "strategies," "projects"

and "wagers on the future" described by Lefebvre by briefly examining the US environmental imaginary in Panama and how it inspired the spatial rationale of the Canal Zone and the design philosophy of the City Beautiful Movement that informed its civic architecture.

Theodore Roosevelt famously wrote "I took Panama": indeed, his mandate left an environmental legacy that would endure throughout the twentieth century, one that paradoxically blends the narratives of expansionism, colonialism, and preservationism. This ideology comes to the fore in Roosevelt's seminal essay "The Importance of Wild Places," written shortly after his voyage through the Panama Canal and inspired by his travels in South America. "Far and wide," he writes, "all the continents are open to him as they never were to any of his forefathers" (114). The masculine pronoun "him" refers to the subject of Roosevelt's imperial adventure, suggesting a male gaze reminiscent of the environmentalist optics of Alexander von Humboldt, and reflects the expanding influence of the United States in Latin America at the turn of the twentieth century[77] (see fig. 6).

Roosevelt's environmental logic present in his essay on Panama is noteworthy for the aporetic relation it creates with the environments it describes. Panama is the very geography and mechanism by which the "Wild Places" of his title are made available to the adventurous turn-of-the-century man, but it is also one of these "Wild Places." It is both the point of departure and the destination representing an impossible passage. He

[77] In "Alexander von Humboldt and the Reinvention of America," the sixth chapter of her seminal work *Imperial Eyes*, Pratt outlines Von Humboldt's environmental optic in the Americas.

continues, “the Nile and the Paraguay are easy of access, and the borderland between savagery and civilization,” and so are these regions the vantage points from which “the veil of the past has been lifted” (114). During the years directly following the construction of the Canal, at the height of Roosevelt’s own renewal of the Monroe Doctrine, the veil of the past had been forcibly lifted, recreating the dialectic of savagery and civilization in part through the construction of the Panama Canal. Here, society does not merely domesticate “nature”; rather, its civilizational task requires and is facilitated by “easy access” to the globe’s savage *topos* and is made possible only *via* this savage *topos.* Panama then is the liminal space *par excellance* of Rooseveltian environmental logic: while it may seem that society sublates “nature,” in Roosevelt’s formulation, these realms were never in fact separate, but enmeshed with one another, blending expansionism, colonialism, and preservationism in an impossible relation. Roosevelt recapitulates in the closing of his essay: “The beauty and charm of the wilderness are his for the asking, for the edges of the wilderness lie close beside the beaten roads of present travel” (115). We once again arrive at the aporia cited above: wilderness is constructed in contradiction within a network of expanding travel. This road, however, does not buttress the edges of wilderness; instead, the very wilderness *is* the beaten road, and beaten road the wilderness. We can with no great effort replace “asking” with “taking” (“I took Panama”) and arrive back at the beginning of Roosevelt’s environmental legacy. In the first decades of the twentieth century, the sublime Panamanian wilderness is available as never before to US expansionism. Preservationism, within a Rooseveltian environmental logic, is not simply the preservation of the wild, but the assignment of Panamanian wilderness *as* the “beaten roads of present travel.” Roosevelt smuggles US foreign policy

into his writings on nature where expansionism and colonialism construct the very foundations for a preservationist model, one that is still lauded in the United States today, and that would echo throughout the century of US control of the Panama Canal Zone.

Indeed, even in the rhetoric of the late seventies, after the Torrijos-Carter Treaty had launched the official decolonization of the Canal Zone, the Rooseveltian environmental legacy can still be heard. An environmental elegy printed in 1979 in *The Panama Canal Review*, the main English language publication of the Canal Zone, reproduces the logic of Roosevelt's own writings:

> The rich array of flora and fauna in the Canal Zone is a legacy from a passing era. One hopes they will become a living testimonial to wise men who, appreciating the legacy, will work to resolve the conflict between the pressure for rapid economic development in the Canal area on the one hand, and the need to preserve the natural environment to ensure the continued existence of this serendipitous jungle on the other. (39)

In the concern it expresses about the environmental future of the Canal Zone, the passage highlights how the environmental protection of the zone is in fact dependent on the same rapid economic expansion—or in Rooseveltian terms, "easy access"—that is treated as suspect. Preservation—also juxtaposed to local banana cultivation in the Río Chagres basin—is couched in the same serendipitous "Wild Places" heralded by Roosevelt. This is to say, preservationism, even after the Torrijos-Carter Treaty, ascribes importance to Wild Places, and thus renders "Wild" a construction entirely dependent on the (co)existence of economic development via fixed and transport capital. This conflictive dialectic is a false one insofar as it ignores the ways the flora and fauna to be preserved

are in fact embedded in the fixed capital of the Canal. Indeed, the environmental legacy of the Zone ensures that the realms of capital and nature are thoroughly enmeshed and inextricable to the point that what began as hope to preserve the natural world guides its destruction. The architectural landscaping and engineering of the Canal Zone shows us that very little is in fact "serendipitous" about this jungle, that it is bent, shaped, and maintained, to uphold an aesthetic steeped in colonial ideology.

Present today in Canal Zone settlements—like Balboa, Ancon Hill, Paradise, Hell, City of Knowledge, and Rainbow City—is the architectural legacy of the turn of the twentieth century.[78] The World's Columbian Exhibition of 1893 in Chicago gave birth to the architectural and landscape movement known as the City Beautiful Movement. Blending utilitarian military designs, this attempt to beautify US cities like Washington DC and San Francisco was imported to the Canal Zone: as Magalí Arriola notes, "Outstanding among its basic considerations were the integration of population and the environment through the development of attractive urban spaces; the restoration of natural attractions; the sanitation of the city" (71). The Canal Zone was a lesser-known testing site for the City Beautiful Movement's more grandiose projects. Its most prominent example, the monolithic Canal Administration Building that stands on a hill above *el prado* in Balboa, mimics plans for similar buildings in Chicago, Seattle, Denver, Dallas and Kansas City (see fig. 7). As one of its architects, Daniel Burnham, wrote in 1902, "everyone saw plainly that, though a pond be beautiful, a grassy lawn or bank beautiful, a building beautiful, all of these elements wrought into a harmonious design

[78] The names of these towns have been translated to Spanish: Balboa, Cerro Ancón, Paraíso, Diablo, Ciudad del Saber, and Ciudad Arcoiris.

attain another and greater beauty, and that the beauty of the whole is superior to that of each of the several parts of the composition exploited separately" (619). Within this US-imported urban geography, the new urban aesthetic is reliant on "natural attractions" (preservation), or a "natural" aesthetic: curving, tree-lined boulevards, open green spaces, cul-de-sacs, and jungle access.[79] William H. Wilson reminds us that, "Unfortunately, City Beautiful denoted aesthetic concerns, not necessarily an important consideration in housing surveys, recreation, or land use" (289). Instead, through environmental mimesis, the architectonics of the Zone demarcate these "natural attractions" as representative of idealized leisure and civic life. While the point of departure of the City Beautiful Movement is distinct from that of Roosevelt's "Importance of Wild Places," from both vantage points, the Canal Zone landscape is a liminal space where architectonic and environmental logics are enmeshed.

What the Canal Novels show us is a way to disrupt these original "wagers on the future" that seek modernization through the architectural landscape of the Canal and its surrounding environment. They elaborate on an aesthetic of landscape that unpacks how truly dominant and alienating the Zone had become in Panama in the early 1960s, and convey how, in order to break from what Lefebvre calls "the realization of a master's project" inherent in dominant space, one must look at the zone from within, and through the landscape (165). In the Canal Novels, Tejeira and Beleño seek to reinterpret the landscape to unchain its political potential.

[79] Gale and Suisman write in the *Panama Canal Review*, "Few urban dwellers share as much of their living space with jungle animals as do those who live in the Canal Zone" (38).

Pueblos perdidos

Gil Blas Tejeira, a member of La Academia Panameña de la Lengua and ambassador to Costa Rica and Venezuela,[80] claimed that the writing of *Pueblos perdidos* was a project of long gestation beginning around 1937. On a train car of the Panama Canal Railroad, accompanied by the Venezuelan intellectual Rómulo Gallegos, Tejeira writes, "Al orillar el tren el Lago Gatún, el máximo novelista y querido maestro me hizo preguntas que yo le contesté con entusiasmo.—Aquí está tu novela—me dijo" (As the train rounded Lake Gatún, the great novelist and beloved teacher asked me questions that I answered with enthusiasm.—Here is your novel—he told me; 219). This quote predicts a reading of *Pueblos perdidos* as a remnant of the *novela de la tierra,* of which Gallegos's own *Doña Bárbara* is considered a paragon.[81] *Pueblos perdidos* attempts to create foundational Panamanian myths; it is an historical novel that, in Tejeira's words "Empieza con la llegada de los franceses al Istmo para darle comienzo a la Gran Zanja y termina con la entrada del Ancon a las esclusas de Gatún el 15 de Agosto de 1914" ([It] begins with the arrival of the French to the isthmus to initiate the Great Trench and ends with the entrance of the Ancón to the Gatún Locks the 15th of August, 1914; 219). The political and literary gravitas of Tejeira positions *Pueblos perdidos* as a didactic work. In Panamanian critic Andrés Ruilope's words, *Pueblos perdidos* should be a "libro de Educación complementaria en los programas de literatura nacional. Y la usarán los

[80] For an analysis on Tejeira's oeuvre, see Rodrigo Miró's *La literatura panameña*.

[81] See Alonso's "The *criollista* novel" in *The Cambridge History of Latin American Literature* for an analysis of *Doña Bárbara* and the politics of landscape in the Latin American Novel of the 20's.

profesores de historia. Y lo leerán los panameños que buscan la verdad del pasado" (a complementary educational book in national literature programs. And history professors will use it. And Panamanians who seek the truth of the past will read it; 223). Of interest here is not simply the historic rigor by which Tejeira re-writes Panamanian myths, but also the places where this history is unearthed. As in the *novela de la tierra,* in *Pueblos perdidos* national myths are revealed in the localized and natural milieu; yet in the Canal Zone, the landscape has been so powerfully altered that the novel must be re-read to better understand how political resistance to colonization is embedded in the Canal Zone landscape.

Pueblos perdidos follows María de los Angeles, a Guatemalan immigrant and owner of a cantina aptly named La Antigua, who falls in love with French architect Camile Rostand. María is, paradoxically as an immigrant, an allegory for the transitioning Republic of Panama, both because of her omnipresence throughout the novel, and because she connects the characters in the novel through romantic or parental relations. She marries Camile, with whom she has a son, echoing France's historic involvement in the Canal construction; Camile leaves Panama and seeks other opportunities in the Americas, never to return.[82] María later marries the American Dr. Simpson, who has been sent by William Gorgas—the man responsible for eradicating yellow fever in Panama—to sanitize the Caribbean city of Colón.

[82] The French Panama Canal project began in 1876 by Société Internationale du Canal Interocéanique led by engineer Ferdinand Lesseps, who had completed the Suez Canal just four years before.

At the turn of the century, the Caribbean Coast of Panama, where the Chagres River still flowed, was the locus of colossal national and environmental upheaval. At the twilight of the Guerra de mil días, the historical figure Pedro Prestán, one of the central characters in the first half of the novel, burns down the city of Colón in the 100 Years' War, after which he is hung in the gallows above the Panama Canal Railroad tracks, a spectacle that documents the horror of US intervention and marks a shift in the cadence of the novel.[83] The second half of the novel chronicles the coming of age of María de los Angeles's son Camilo, a Hispanicized version of his absent French father Camile. Camilo, as a resident of Colón, begins to see massive movements in the landscape, the excavation of a waterway, and the leveling of towns that stand in the way of the Canal:

> Los pueblos de La Línea fueron sacrificados a favor de la gran vía; entre los primeros, Gatún. Ahorca Lagarto desapareció del mapa, lo mismo que Bohío Soldado y Buena Vista. Frijoles fue inundado y en su lugar se levantó una nueva comunidad al amparo de la vía férrea. Tabernillo, San Pedro, Mamey quedaron como nombres históricos. (208)
>
> (The towns of the The Line were sacrificed in favor of the great route; among the first, Gatún. Ahorca Lagarto disappeared from the map, the same with Bohío Soldado and Buena Vista. Frijoles was flooded and, in its

[83] Tejeira writes Prestán as "la figura cimera de la primera parte" (the crowning figure of the first part; 217). He continues, "He puesto empeño en rescatar la figura del mulato revolucionario sacrificado a intereses de la política de su época y a los comerciales y extranjeros que entonces tenían indeclinable vigencia" (I have given my utmost to rescuing the figure of the revolutionary mulatto sacrificed to the interests of the politics of his time and to businesses and the foreigners that then had unavoidable validity; 217).

> place, rose a new community in the shelter of the railway. Tabernillo, San Pedro, Mamey became historical names.)

As Tejeira asserts through his catalog of vanished towns, the map becomes a repository for history, it is disposed to changes in the landscape as well as to flows of global capital. By narrating the visual disappearance of lost settlements, which are quite literally swept away and submerged in the path of the Canal, Tejeira protests the oblivion of history and seeks to resurrect narratives of communities lost in a landscape that no longer exists. He writes, "me he tomado las libertades amplias a que tiene derecho un novelista, pero he respetado los hechos históricos fundamentales, tomados de documentos auténticos" (I have taken ample liberties that a novelist has, but I have respected the fundamental historic facts, taken from authentic documents; 219). Tejeria's rigor thus serves to document the ways landscape is brimming with history, a notion that was well received in Panamanian literary criticism.

Tejeira reveals how changes in the landscape are not only seen, but also made possible through aesthetic experience under aseptic US sovereignty of the region. Camilo, now a man, finds himself in the employ of the US physicians core sent to eradicate yellow fever; but their sanitizing role is a guise for appropriating land along the banks of the Chagres River, which will eventually be flooded. Those who do not relocate will be drowned, as is borne out by any post-1914 map of Panama that depicts the sparsely populated dendritic Lake Gatún. In the last moments of the novel, Camilo stands on the bank of the newly fabricated Lake Gatún and attempts to understand a landscape that is incomprehensible. For the protagonist, this is a moment of the sublime: "Camilo [...] trató de penetrar con su Mirada el laberinto de islas y árboles ya deshojados que se le

antojaron cruces caprichosas sembradas sobre el enorme cementerio de pueblos y fincas sacrificados para formar el lago artificial" (Camilo [...] tried to penetrate with his gaze the labyrinth of islands and already bare trees that gave him the feeling of capricious crosses sown across the enormous cemetery of towns and farms sacrificed to create the artificial lake; 217). This final and lasting image of the novel recalls Kantian aesthetics specifically in what I consider to be a challenge to the mechanisms of the sublime.

In "The Sense of the Beautiful and the Sublime," Kant distinguishes between the beautiful and the sublime in an important way for this analysis of Canal aesthetics. He writes:

> A view of a mountain, the snowy peaks of which rise above the clouds, a description of a raging storm or a description by Milton of the Kingdom of Hell cause pleasure, but it is mixed with awe; on the other hand, a view of a flower-filled meadow, valleys with winding brooks and the heads upon them, the description of *Elysium* or Homer's description of the belt of Venus cause an agreeable feeling which is gay and smiling. (3)

The sublime induces awe in a way that is not comprehensible within the object itself, illustrated by the mountain peak hidden from view in the clouds. Furthermore, the sublime implies an awe-induced line of questioning as to the possibilities of artistic representation. Kant writes that the sublime "gives a veritable extension, not of course to our knowledge of objects of nature, but to our concept of nature itself—nature as mere mechanism being enlarged to the concept of nature as art—an extension inviting profound inquiries as to the possibility of such a form" (301). Within the sublime, in other words, exists a questioning of the concepts of art and nature and how they can

relate to one another. The sentiment of the sublime in a Canal aesthetic, however, does not owe solely to the incomprehensibility and grandiosity of the new hydrologic landscape; rather, the aesthetic object in question here is a new Panama where nature and society are indistinguishable: the *lago* is artificial, a construction. Lake Gatún, which comprises a large portion of the Canal route, is both that road of "easy access" for global capital and a wild place where what were once mountains have become islands in a colossal reservoir. The built environment in the closing words of the novel is not as rigid as it may seem. In fact, Camilo's sense of the sublime reveals the way Roosevelt's roads of modernity are already enmeshed with the natural environment, and how these sites of enmeshment are also the sites of catastrophe where the *pueblos perdidos* of the Canal, now under the water—and with them, the graves of some 20, 000 Silver Roll workers—are suspended in the Canal Zone landscape.[84]

The new islands above the surface of the water of this new hydrological landscape—a lake, a reservoir, or a canal—are the gravestones of a terrifying reality below. In the novel, the landscape is a sepulcher of an old Panama and an antiquated social relation to nature. By recounting the past with the rigor of a historian, Tejeira tells us something about the historical potential of the Canal Novel in that it illuminates what is hidden from view. In his "Theses on the Philosophy of History" Walter Benjamin evokes this blindness and its catastrophic potential through the Angel of History whose

[84] The Gold and Silver Rolls refer to the segregated payment method for Panama Canal workers. The Gold Roll was comprised of white European or US workers often holding skilled or management positions, while the Silver Roll was comprised of workers of color who were charged with the most dangerous tasks and systematically earned less than those of the Gold Roll.

"face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet" (257). The flow of the Canal here for Tejeira is the endless flow of homogenous time, or global capital, and by noticing its constructedness, as well as its naturalness, we stop this flow of time and see flashing up from the below the surface the dead that inhabit the Canal Zone landscape. For Tejeira, the sublime of the Canal aesthetic is the grandiosity of history itself, a wreckage sunken under water. In *El tema del canal de la novelística panameña*, Melinda Ruth Sepúlveda claims "*Pueblos perdidos* no refleja un sentido de protesta, sino que mantiene el valor de una magnífica crónica sobre hechos históricos ocurridos en la ciudad de Colón y sobre los pueblos a lo largo del río Chagres" (*Pueblos perdidos* does not reflect a sense of protest, but maintains the value of a magnificent chronicle about historic facts that took place in the city of Colón and about the towns along the Chagres River; 30). This would be true if the criticism of the novel were to revolve solely on the historical event in a vacuum of empty, Euclidean space, as that which drives history. By focusing on the landscape in a more dynamic way, readers are propelled to rethink the underbelly of the historical and the homogenous time created by the Canal. Tejeira is telling us something about the natural and artificial fabrics that the Panama Canal creates, and how ultimately, these two fabrics are interwoven. Camilo takes notice of the great artificiality of Lake Gatún, yet what he really sees is history sunken into a flooded landscape.

Los forzados de Gamboa

Joaquín Beleño, Panamanian novelist, journalist, and winner of the Faulkner Ibero-American books prize and the Concurso Ricardo Miró award, was proudest of his

political activism. He writes in his autobiography: "Es mi opinión que en el campo de servir al Estado he realizado un notable trabajo, casi desconocido en su importancia y en mi concepto más importante que mi aporte literario al país" (It is my opinion that in the field of serving the State I have realized a notable work, almost unknown in its importance and in my view more important than my literary contribution to the country; 19).[85] His involvement in political movements, especially the student movement, in the fifties and sixties was largely influenced by his experience as a timekeeper at the Canal Docks, experiences impacted by the Canal Zone racial politics we see narrated throughout his Canal Novels, and especially in *Los forzados de Gamboa*. Indeed, although Beleño does not overtly identify as an Afro-Panamanian writer, his oeuvre undoubtedly speaks directly to the complexity of racial, linguistic, and spatial phenomena produced by US colonialism in the Canal Zone: the characters in *Los forzados de Gamboa*—a novel set in the hinterland of the Canal Zone in Gamboa prison—embody racial and spatial politics in the zone.[86] For Beleño, the racial politics of the Canal Zone are spatialized and his critique of US interventionism, coupled with existing racial

[85] Sonja Stephenson Watson points out in "*Los nietos de Felicidad Dolores* (*The Grandchildren of Felicidad Dolores*) and The Afro-Hispanic Historical Novel" that although *Los forzados* was required reading in Panamanian schools, Beleño was not without critique, especially from Carlos "Cubena" Guillermo Wilson, who rebuked Beleño's overly archetypal West Indian Panamanians.

[86] His other novels *Luna verde* (1951), *Curundú* (1963), and *Flor de banana* (1970) narrate racial, linguistic, and labor relations within the Canal Zone. See Strom's dissertation *The Novels of Joaquín Beleño C.: A Critical Appraisal of* Curundú, Luna verde, Gamboa Road Gang *and* Flor de banana. See also Rodríguez's *Dividing the Isthmus*.

networks, is expressed through his character's relationship to the natural and built landscapes.[87]

The Canal Zone is an interior exteriority stretching five miles from the centerline of the Canal, surrounded in barbed wire fencing affectionately known as *malla ciclón* [chain-link] that delimits the governance of US sovereignty. Beleño writes in the preface to his novel, "Aquí en la Zona del Canal, en mi propio territorio, los Estados Unidos que le debe gran parte de su grandeza mundial al sacrificio de los istmeños, me niega el derecho de practicar mi libertad" (Here in the Canal Zone, in my own territory, the United States which owes a great part of its global grandeur to the sacrifice of the isthmians, negates me the right to practice my liberty; 17). In the Panama of *Los forzados,* this negation of liberty is stratified racially through the importation of Jim Crow racial codes to the Canal Zone, under which Afro-descendant populations without distinction are the lowest members of society, and those who complicate these fixed categories, consequently, are marginalized both by *zonians* and by white and mestizo Panamanians. Scholarship on this novel has focused almost solely on the character of Atá, a white-skinned Afro-descendant Panamanian based on the real Gamboa inmate Leon Lester Greaves, who were imprisoned for 50 years for allegedly raping a white *zonian* woman. My focus here will be rather on the novel's first-person narrator, inmate number 33, a man resembling Beleño in age and political activism. The narrator relates to his surrounding landscape in a far different way than his fellow prisoners: through him,

[87] See Emily Frances Davidson's dissertation entitled *Canal Memories: Race, Space and the Construction of Modern Panama*.

we experience an unsettling proximity to the Canal Zone landscape, its flora and fauna, as well as its racializing architectonics.

Beleño's Canal Zone resembles a plantocracy. Édouard Glissant writes that the plantation is a closed space and that "each plantation was defined by boundaries whose crossing was strictly forbidden; impossible to leave without written permission" (64). However, in the Canal Zone, this plantation structure is inverted: if Panamanians are caught *entering* without written permission, they will be punished and sent to prison and forced into labor like slaves. Beleño writes, "Los amos del latifundio zoneíta, me lo impiden: si entro y me detienen me condenarán de nuevo a la cárcel de Gamboa" (The masters of the *zonian* plantation prevent me [from entering]: if I enter and they detain me, they will lock me up again in Gamboa Prison; 17). Like plantocracies, the exclusionary and insular environment of the Canal Zone is predicated on global capital, or as Glissant claims "paradoxically, have all the symptoms of extroversion" (67). Patent evidence of this paradox is the historic ordinance by which, even as ships from across the world were ushered through the locks at Gatún and Miraflores, Panamanians were restricted from entering the Zone, and if they did, were subjected to Jim Crow segregation policies. This same exclusionary extraversion is built into the landscape of the Canal Zone—in its fencing, curving roads, cul-de-sacs, and prisons. This plantocratic spatiality of Canal Zone architectonics, as evidenced by the rhetoric of the City Beautiful Movement, mimics the natural environment. For this reason, the Canal Zone of Beleño's novel is reminiscent of an inverted slave plantation where the natural outside is already incorporated into the exclusionary inside.

In *Ariel's Ecology: Plantations, Personhood, and Colonialism in the American Tropics*, Monique Allewaert writes that on the plantation "animals, persons, plants, artifacts and their histories, and even land were penetrating, fusing with, transforming one another" (31). Similar corporeal assemblages are central to Beleño's contestation of Canal Zone landscape. The narrator and *los forzados* (the chain gang) are forced into labor and sent into the jungle hills near Madden Dam, where electricity is produced by damming the Chagres River. Under the strict supervision of English-speaking *zonian*/*gringo* guards, the inmates cut down *paja canalera*, or Canal tall grass.[88] There Beleño begins to enmesh with the Canal landscape, his narrator lamenting "pero las hierbas malignas crecen siempre en mí. Para exterminar mi mal necesito un herbicida espiritual" (but the malignant weeds forever grown inside me. To exterminate my evil, I need a spiritual herbicide; 29). Similarly, coming upon a nest of snakes and their eggs, the narrator cuts open the eggs with his machete and lets the protoplasm of the fetal snakes ooze into the *paja* and across his hands, which have grown large blisters and leak into the protoplasm: "Comparé los líquidos. Ambos eran malignos y venenosos" (I compared the liquids. Both were malignant and venomous; 26). Both *paja* and snake enmesh with the narrator's body against his will. However, for Beleño, there is an agentive quality to this type of enmeshment, what Allewaert calls "combining ecological forces" (30). Here, the protagonist undergoes an environmental awakening experienced on the level of the body, that while some plants and animals indeed cut or bite into human flesh, at the same time, they also bear human legacies. This opens Gamboa Prison to flora

[88] The importation of *paja canalera* [Saccharum spontaneum] was introduced by the US to curb Canal bank erosion and has since become an invasive species in the canal basin.

and fauna that have been supposedly cut out by the *malla ciclón*, sanitized and separated from nature by Jim Crow segregation. The enmeshment of the human and the non-human brought to bear in the Canal Zone is here endowed with a political potential capable of unsettling the repressive social and environmental milieu.

Narrating five years in the life of Gamboa prison, *Los forzados* portrays the political and linguistic alienation in the zone and its foundation in US-style racial segregation as directed against mestizo Panamanians and Afro-descendant Panamanians. Some inmates are imprisoned for stealing iguanas, others for stealing scrap iron from jobsites along the canal; or, as in the case of Atá, for committing crimes against *zonians*. Yet, collaterally, Beleño writes as a witness to fundamental changes to personhood and the natural world within the landscape of the Canal Zone. Hilda Ruth Sepúlveda writes, "Hay una constante referencia a la naturaleza en la novelística canalera. Se convierte en símbolo y responde a la injusticia de los hombres […] El césped recortado siempre indigna y en esa mutación ve un rasgo más de frustración" (There is a constant reference to nature in the canal narrative. It is converted into a symbol and responds to the injustice of men […] The trimmed lawn, always indignant, and in that mutation one sees another act of frustration; 59). Beleño writes the landscape not solely through a mode of frustration, but actively probes environmental possibilities as a counterpoint to the Canal aesthetics of freshly cut grass and the grandiosity of progress—dominant space *par excellance*. The *malla ciclón*, as mentioned above, the curving Canal Zone roads, and the canal infrastructure itself serve as the rubric of the dominant aesthetic, where, from a distance, life seems to be orderly, ordinary, and suburban. The Canal Zone architectonics is thus another site of Beleño's corporeal, contestatory mode.

The narratives about expansionism, preservationism, and colonialism sanctioned by US occupation become visible in the architectonics of Beleño's novel, highlighted in spaces like the highway outside of Gamboa Prison, down which *zonian* cars speed on warm afternoons. The *carretera* is a liminal space marking the prison threshold and a site where animals are run over while crossing the road. The narrator claims, "Percibo perfectamente el olor del hormigón. Huele a carne. Carne humana y carne animal. Es de la culebra de proteína rosada. Sobre el lomo del camino blanco de cemento, haciendo un signo de infinito, las culebras amanecen muertas, sorprendidas en su alarde de cruzar de un extremo a otro" (I perceive perfectly the odor of the concrete. It smells of flesh. Human and animal flesh. It's the snake's pink protein. On the spine of the white cement road, making the symbol of infinity, the snakes wake up dead, surprised at their own gall of crossing from one side to the other; 34). The road is saturated with animal and human flesh alike; it is both as an allusion to the "diggers" who perished in the canal's construction, as well as the would-be escapees who, like Atá at the novel's end, are gunned down by the *zonian* guards. It is also significant that Beleño's narrator does not "see" this liminal space built into the landscape, but instead smells it permeating the prison grounds. He continues, "Para unos, la carretera es la civilización y el progreso, para mí es el sepulcro donde claudica para siempre el hambre voraz de toda esta fauna que sale de las montañas para enfrentarse a la civilización moderna" (35) [For some, the highway is civilization and progress, for me it is the sepulcher that forever gives in to the voracious hunger of all of that fauna that leaves the mountains to confront modern civilization]. The built environment—the road—of the Canal Zone landscape does not tidily parallel Roosevelt's "Wild Places," and contradictory to Sepúlveda's analysis,

Beleño does not situate his narrative in binaries of nature and civilization. Instead, this threshold is another sepulchral space that is inhabited and contested, where human life, the built environment, and animal life are enmeshing with one another: in it, a distinct aesthetic is born wherein a Kantian aesthetic of the gaze is problematized. In *Los forzados*, unlike in the distanced visual rationalization of the sublime, the landscape is too close to see, and thus begins to inhabit the narrator's body obliquely.

Los forzados de Gamboa questions the possibility of seeing. In his final moments in prison, the narrator confesses, "Amo la belleza cruel de las carreteras [...] Las carreteras zoneítas atraviesan selvas y poblados; lagunas y aeródromos; fortalezas y jardines; puentes, esclusas y barcos [...]" (I love the cruel beauty of the highways [...] the *zonian* highways that pierce the jungles and villages; lagoons and airfields; forts and gardens; bridges, locks, and ships; 212). The infrastructure of the Canal Zone, what Beleño calls "aquella cinta de piedra y cemento" (that strip of rock and cement), is designed to produce progress, or at least the representation of it; yet this progress is not easily read or visible in the landscape, because it is hostile and alienating to Panamanians who are marginalized by it. Landscape does not function like the exotic edifice of a colossal backdrop of nature, or like Van Ingen's painting on the rotunda ceiling of the Canal Administration Building (see fig. 8), which reproduce the awe-inspiring Kantian sublime. Instead, Beleño's writing renders human bodies, as well as the built landscape, permeable, less rigid, so that each informs the other in a way that contradicts nature as something that is diametrically opposed to the human. And what Beleño writes are not idyllic "returns" to nature that express some harmony or unity, even synthesis. Rather, along the Canal Zone, the relationships between the human and the non-human are

fragmented and fraught, permeated with pain and latent suffering of colonial rule, yet Beleño writes them as new imaginaries of Panama within and without the purview of US sovereignty.

Conclusion

The former Canal Zone has undergone vast changes since Panama took sovereign power of the Canal in 1999, and notwithstanding its expansion in 2016, much of its landscape and architectonics remain. The Canal Novel and its proponents, Tejeira and Beleño, use this very landscape to reimagine the Canal Zone against US intervention. Tejeira endeavors to show not only how inseparable the built and natural worlds become in the Canal Zone, but also that what is truly sublime in the Canal Zone landscape is its subaqueous history, hidden from view. While Beleño's narratological scope is much smaller, negotiated in the body, its aesthetic implications are vast. By seeking to understand the non-human actors involved in identity formation, Beleño opens an environmental aesthetic within Panama's decolonial movements of the 1960s. Snakes, weeds, and the Canal Zone roadways are actors within a network of racialized US-sovereign space that disrupt the human's dominance over the landscape. A Canal Zone aesthetic that mobilizes these elements not as an Arcadian backdrop or as static objects provides new avenues of critique into the complex racial politics of Panama.

CHAPTER IV
Infrastructure, Commodities, and Ruins in Milton Hatoum and Márcio Souza

In the late 1960s, the Brazilian Amazon underwent a colossal change: the Brazilian military dictatorship (1964–1985) appointed Manaus as the economic hub of the vast Amazonian region. Operation Amazon sought economic development across Amazonia with tax breaks for national and international companies and was part and parcel of the Brazilian Miracle. The Brazilian Miracle, which was characterized by rapid economic growth, was embodied in infrastructural projects as well. The Niterói Bridge, the Trans-Amazonian highway, and BR–364, which connects the state of São Paulo and the western state of Acre, are examples of dictatorial development projects giving shape to the military dictatorship's desired scale advertised in its propaganda: *Brasil Grande.* This chapter is about the Zona Franca of Manaus, a lesser-known large industrial project, but one that holds fundamental importance for a discussion of Amazonia, its natural environs, and the megaprojects that shape it. In 1966, the governors of the Amazonian regions signed the "Amazonian Manifesto," which describes Amazonia as an empty space that "requires the establishment of conditions for its occupation" and underscores that "the occupation and the rational use of such an empty space, by Brazil, is a must for national security" (Garcia 46). The Law of National Security 314 of 1967 lays out in detail the military dictatorship's preoccupation with "antagonismos, tanto internos como externos" (antagonisms, foreign and domestic).[89] In 1968, on the eastern reaches of the city of Manaus, the Zona Franca began to take shape as a conglomeration of factories,

[89] See Câmara dos Deputados, "Decreto-Lei nº 314."

warehouses, new roads and infrastructures, and grazing land for industrial food. Radios, motorcycles, and the televisions that aired popular *novelas* of the late 1960s and early 1970s bore the emblem "Produzido no Polo Industrial de Manaus."

In this chapter, I analyze the short story collections *A caligrafia de Deus* (1993), by Márcio Souza, and *A cidade ilhada* (2009), by Milton Hatoum, and in them, their baroque/neobaroque elements. The six short stories I analyze tell of colossal shifts in the land caused by the construction of the Zona Franca of Manaus, which introduced a new material world onto the streets of Manaus, one that came into contact with the built environment of the past—the neoclassical and ornate architectonics of the Paris of the Tropics–and the urban ecology of igarapés (streams) in the dry and rainy seasons. The two Manaus-born novelists write characters belonging to two groups: those who occupy the margins of Manaus and find ruination and pollution everywhere, and those who are thrust into the absurd inner workings of capitalist proliferation in the Zona Franca. The baroque/neobaroque mechanisms of proliferation and ruination construct a mosaic of the unsettling human and non-human relations of development in Manaus. My claim is that while development projects like the Zona Franca symbolize Brazil's industrial progress, the everyday experiences of people in Manaus reveal a much more complicated infrastructural and ecological reality, a reality which the authors approach via baroque aesthetics.

The baroque/neobaroque is an aesthetic, a cultural logic,[90] and a historical

[90] In *Culture of the Baroque*, José Antonio Maravall describes the baroque as mass, guided, urban, and ultimately conservative culture; see also Maravall, "From the Renaissance to the Baroque," 3; see also Nadir Lahiji's *Adventures with the Theory of the Baroque and French Philosophy*, where Lahiji writes, "any critique of the baroque must

marker[91] derived from the Portuguese term *barroco*, or "misshapen pearl"[92]; beauty brought to its absurd limits. The baroque has been used in Latin American contexts throughout the twentieth century as a theoretical and artistic framework to understand intersections of coloniality, race, class, and aesthetics in Latin America.[93] I read in Souza's *A caligrafia de Deus* and Hatoum's *A cidade ilhada* three baroque mechanisms: proliferation, folds, and ruins. Cuban writer Sévero Sarduy, whose theory of proliferation I follow here, tells Spanish TV host Joaquín Soler that "([The baroque] is not a word game, it is not about pure amusement. It is not a frivolous exercise…The baroque

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necessarily pass through a critique of capitalism and its different configurations, both in terms of the historical Baroque and its transfiguration" (15). See also Gilles Deleuze's *The Fold*, in which he writes, "If the Baroque has often been associated with capitalism, it is because the Baroque is linked to a crisis of property, a crisis that appears at once with the growth of new machines in the social field and the discovery of new living being in the organism" (110).

[91] William Egginton writes in *The Theater of Truth*, "In practically all attempts to theorize the Baroque, the same dilemma is encountered: when we use the term Baroque are we speaking of a universal style or a historical period? The dilemma is by no means a mere problem of nomenclature, easily dismissed by footnote or parenthetical commentary; rather, it is a consistent problem that haunts the work of theorists from Wölfflin to D'ors, Maravall to Deleuze" (69).

[92] For a wide-ranging analysis of neobaroque manifestations in the Americas, see Kaup, *Neobaroque in the Americas*.

[93] See Lezama Lima, *La expresión americana*, 79. See also De Campos, *O sequestro do barroco na formação da literatura brasileira*, 39–71. See also Hansen and Pécora, "Literatura del siglo XVII em Bahía," 1117–1159; See also Verónica Gago's *Neoliberalism from Below*, where Gago writes, "The *baroque* logic, of heterogeneous composition, is the expressive dynamic of the contemporary social-political-economic moment that uses long-term memories while proving to be unabashedly flexible for making the city, businesses, and politics. Thus, a dispute unfolds about the idea of *progress* itself, in its purely accumulative and linear meaning. Those *baroque* logics are the material, affective, and expansive fabric that I analyzed in certain popular economies and require us to recategorize what we understand as the productive forces in Latin American metropolises" (235).

questions. It puts parody in discussion with this society in which we live totally based on the economy. The baroque squanders. It throws everything out the window" (1978). In his canonical essay "El barroco y el neobarroco," Sarduy claims proliferation "consiste en obliterar el significante de un significado dado pero no remplazándolo por otro […] sino por una cadena de significantes que progresa metonímicamente que termina circunscribiendo al significante ausente" (consists in obliterating the signifier of a given signified but not replacing it with another […] but rather as a chain of signifiers that progresses metonymically, ultimately circumscribing the absent signifier; 170). Chains of words proliferate and erase the logic prescribed to a single word. In this chapter I liken Sarduy's theory of proliferation to the commodity production of the Zona Franca, along with the extending reach of pollution in Manaus's urban waters. I read Sarduy alongside Deleuze's concept of *the fold,* to further bring to the fore how literary style offers a unique glimpse into the frontiers of Amazonian dictatorial development. The fold is a conceptual break from Cartesian essentialism of *res cogitans* and *res extensa*; between subject and object, discourse and materiality. Deleuze claims that the fold allows one to understand how "we go from matter to manner" (35), or rather, how materiality and style are in constant contact with one another. The ruin, a baroque theme analyzed by Benjamin, is a signpost of the fold, where history and non-human nature are most entangled. In *Origin of the German Tragic Drama*, Benjamin writes, "Allegories are in the realm of thoughts what ruins are in the realm of things" (178). Allegories, like ruins, fall out of fashion and decay revealing their transitoriness. In Souza, dictatorial development proliferates across the literary and material structures of Amazonia, while in Hatoum, simultaneous ruination signals a final cry of failed development in the Manaus

of the past, lived out in the present. These baroque/neobaroque theories provide a generative approach to studying the Zona Franca of Manaus and the (il)logical components at the heart of Amazonian development.

Zona Franca de Manaus

The military dictatorship built up Brazil with megaprojects that became the embodiment of the economic and nationalist agenda.[94] The military dictatorship's attempt to modernize, develop, and secure Brazil was felt perhaps nowhere more than in Amazonia. Before leaving office in 1967, Humberto Castelo Branco inaugurated *Operação Amazonia*, which provided vast fiscal incentives for industrial capital in the Amazon. The occupation of a so-called empty Amazon was a military intervention in neocolonial terms: "the final conquest of the Amazon Region" which "achieved in a way as to also secure a harmonious interregional integration" (46). Integrating the regions of the Amazon would be accomplished by the "substitution of extractivism, as the main sector, for more productive and more socially evolved economic activity" (46). The Zona Franca of Manaus would be the crown jewel of import substitution industrialization in Amazonia.

Across Brazil, import substitution industrialization produced new relationships with nature, labor, and internal markets. In Brazil, replacing the imports of industrialized products with domestic industrial products was largely accomplished first by the

[94] For a wide-ranging literary analysis of construction during the Brazilian military dictatorship, see Beal, *Brazil Under Construction.*

dictatorship of Getúlio Vargas, and later the military dictatorship.[95] Historian Halperin Donghi writes, "the structure of Brazilian industrialization began to ramify and diversify in a way not seen before in any Latin American country. Despite the continuation—indeed, the exacerbation—of vast social inequalities" (313). Donghi, like both Souza and Hatoum, saw the experience of "technological advance within a still largely archaic Third World framework, and that success seemed to favor the consolidation of the regime that had fostered it" (313). The so-called "Third-World framework" is important in the context of non-human nature, for it includes nature within an extractive logic. While Amazonia ceased to be solely an extractive zone, the four-century-old binaries of nature and culture were being challenged. The imagery of the Zona Franca is particularly telling with regard to this transition.

To demonstrate the scope of extraction, import substitution industrialization, and Amazonian environments, I turn to a postage stamp from the Zona Franca (see fig. 9). The stamp from 1982 is composed of three sections: (1) blue rivers and green jungle, (2) three hands holding a plant, a bolt, and a coin, and (3) a white void. The SUFRAMA stamp tells a somewhat ambiguous story, but nonetheless, one of a constructivist nature mobilized by Amazonia's rainforest landscape and industrial potential. What rings ambiguous is the trajectory of the three hands; in or out of Amazonia? Industrial farming (the plant), industrial commodities and infrastructure (the bolt), and monetary exchange (the coin) are all shifting between jungle and the void. What can Amazonia give Brazil

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[95] See Abreu, Bevilaqua, and Pinho "Import Substitution and Growth in Brazil, 1890s-1970s."

and the world market? The answer, ironically, is the void, or rather tax incentives, land, and labor, all of which were provided by the military might of the dictatorship. The one-inch by one-inch stamp is dialectical *in* nature (both extractive and constructive), and it is also dialectical *as* nature: a void and, as Euclides da Cunha wrote in 1903, "portentosa, mas incompleta" (portentous, but incomplete; 12).[96] These were the promises made to Manaus on behalf of Brazil and the world market and made in Amazonia's name.

Manaus had gone through the boom and bust of the rubber trade (1876-1945).[97] Leo Despres writes in *Manaus: Social Life and Work in Brazil's Free Trade Zone*, "Manaus existed in a virtual state of urban decay. For more than fifty years after the collapse of the rubber economy the city stagnated. During this period, the city's streets deteriorated. The uncompleted sanitation system went to rot. The port facilities and many public buildings fell into disrepair" (192). Sophia Beal reminds us that by the early 1970s, the construction of the Zona Franca brought some 200 businesses to Manaus, along with workers from neighboring states.[98] The Zona Franca was built on the eastern reaches of the city of Manaus and displaced anyone in its path. This is the case of the Cidade Flutuante, housing that floated on the Rio Negro, which is narrated in Hatoum's *Dois irmãos* and *Cinzas do Norte*. A new refinery, a bolstered port with expanded

[96] See Da Cunha, *À margem da história*, 12

[97] See Resor, "Rubber in Brazil," 341–366.

[98] For a literary analysis of space in the works of Hatoum, see Beal "Espaços movediços e conflitantes na Manaus de Milton Hatoum"; see also Despres, *Manaus*, 78.

shipping capacity, a renovated airport, suburban housing,[99] and an enhanced military base (SUFRAMA) were built in just a few years.

Souza and Hatoum were critical of the Zona Franca, and particularly the discourse surrounding its developmental potential. In "O desafio da Zona Franca" (1977), Souza writes, "A cidade de Manaus sempre viveu de ilusões," (The city of Manaus always survived through illusions; 161), particularly those imposed on Amazonia from the outside. Souza claims,

> A Zona Franca veio ativar a contradição que crescia invisível nos anos de depressão. No início, as soluções pareceram rápidas, como foi a radical ablação da Cidade Flutuante. Mas hoje, quase na metade do caminho, as periferias incham e cercam o centro da elite, não sendo possível seguir as soluções preestabelecidas que continuam a chegar de Brasília, ou do Rio, ou de Chicago. (166)
>
> (I see the Zona Franca activating the contradiction that grew invisibly during the depression. At the beginning, the solutions seemed quick, like the radical ablation of the Cidade Flutuante. But today, almost in the middle, the peripheries grow and approach the center of the elite, without being possible to follow the preestablished solutions that continue to arrive from Brasilia, or from Rio, or from Chicago.)

These were illusions of development imported from abroad and mobilized through violence the military dictatorship. Hatoum's critique lies more closely nestled within a

[99] See also Hatoum's *Cinzas do Norte* (2005), which chronicles the construction of housing in the northern part of Manaus during the 1970s.

postcolonial critique of modernity in Amazonia. He writes in the preface to *A ilusão do Fausto: Manaus 1890–1920* of an "impasse gerado por uma modernidade incompleta, cuja herança, traduzida dramaticamente em carência social, é mais do que visível na Zona Franca de Manaus" (impasse caused by incomplete modernity, whose legacy, translated dramatically in social need, is more than visible in the Zona Franca of Manaus; 13). Manaus was an imagined playground during the rubber boom, exemplified in films like *Fitzcarraldo* by Werner Herzog, and it became clear for Souza and Hatoum that development and the Zona Franca stood on the already shaky ground of so-called modernity. They understood that the Zona Franca did not provide the infrastructures to complete modernity, but instead reflected repetitive social formations of construction and extraction that continued to borrow from incomplete modernity.[100]

A caligrafia de Deus: a proliferation of folds

Souza's work exhibits tragic irony and brutal humor. In the three stories I analyze from *A caligrafia de Deus*, "No fim da tarde, antes do jantar," "A caligrafia de Deus," and "O velho curtume do bairro," Souza writes from the absurd inner workings of development as it frames the social fabric in Manaus: new infrastructures (housing projects and warehouses) and commodities (assembly line production). These new developments are coming into violent contact with older forms of production (tanneries), and Manaus' urban ecology. Taken to its absurd limits, *A caligrafia de Deus* deconstructs

[100] See Browder and Godfrey, *Rainforest Cities*: "Poloamazonia emphasized a corporatist mode of frontier hegemony, administered largely by the self-interested, bureaucratic agendas of SUDAM, SUFRAMA, and SUDECO" (78–79).

the inner workings of capital excess, Amazonian urbanity, and reveals its folded, proliferating *nature*. “Deus escreve certo com linhas tortas” (God writes straight with crooked lines) goes the common phrase in Brazil, a phrase that echoes throughout Souza’s short stories.

In the short story “No fim da tarde, antes do jantar,” a wife and her sentimental husband converse in a tight-lipped, vulgar, and abusive dialogue. The story takes place in the baroque *chiaroscuro*, evident in the title: neither day, but not yet dinner time. The story is set in the northern suburb of Manaus, A Cidade Nova, a large housing project constructed for the growing population in Manaus in the mid 1970s, in large part due to the Zona Franca. The couple lives in a house on loan from the owner of an illegal warehouse, where the unnamed protagonist guards: “ali mercadorias que entravam legais e saiam ilegais. Os caminhões chegavam cobertos por encerados e saiam carregados de computadores, televisões, essas coisas. E eu via as placas: São Paulo, Paraná etc.” (the goods that entered legally and left illegally. The trucks arrived covered by tarpaulin and left carrying computers, televisions, that stuff. And I saw the license plates: São Paulo, Paraná etc.; 41). The production of commodities in the Zona Franca brings with it an informal sector, which provides an exterior to this drama of the interior: the protagonist’s wife falls deeper into depression, contemplates suicide, and becomes textually silent, resembling a vanitas painting in which the baroque trope of *memento mori* signals the inevitability of death. This analysis unpacks the baroque operations that link the interior and exterior worlds of development.

In the housing project, light penetrates through slivers in the darkening home. All around the Cidade Nova flies red clay from the construction sites of the Zona Franca.

Before her suicide, the wife is struck by the day's last rays of sunlight: "Os raios de sol entravam ali como as espadas no cesto, só que a gente era sempre atingido, apunhalado mil vezes pelas lâmias de luz, lanças incandescentes feitas de poeira dançante e fogo que cruzavam e recursavam a cozinha e me deixavam atordoado" (The rays of the sun stabbed through like swords in a basket, we were always struck, stabbed a thousand times with the tongues of light, incandescent lances made of dancing dirt and fire that crossed and re-crossed the kitchen and they left me stunned; 42). In the way that light takes on materiality in the dust, it penetrates the house of Cidade Nova like swords in a basket, and ultimately, her body. The new suburban Manaus shapes the dirt that floats in dry season, and upon closer observation, the sunlight appears to be folded by currents of dirt passing through its rays. The essential link in the scene describes domestic insularity connected by a folded beam of light to the flows of commodities and contraband on the corporatist frontier of Amazonia. The scene would suggest the inside and outside of capital are linked not by rectilinear lines of development and infrastructural space, but by a baroque fold.

The Cidade Nova house mimics the baroque house drawn by Deleuze in *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque.* For Deleuze, a Cartesian house is drawn like a thinking subject (*res cogitens*) who interacts through the windows with the world outside (*res extensa*); subject and object, two different materials. A baroque house, on the other hand, is built of two stories connected by folds that tether the deepest interiority of the soul to the materiality of the outside world. Deleuze writes, "it is not only because the fold affects all materials that it thus becomes expressive matter, with different scales, speeds, and different vectors (mountains and waters, papers, fabrics, living tissues, the brain), but

especially because it determines and materializes Form" (34). The fold thus becomes an expressive means to understand how "we go from matter to manner; from earth and ground to habits and salons, from the *Textuologie* to the *Logogie*" (35). Matter is distinctive from the soul, but perhaps only on the other side of a fold from it. Like in "O fim da tarde," Deleuze claims, "the fold is inseparable from wind," and "a conglomeration of dust" (31). The omnipresent dust in Cidade Nova, kicked up by trucks moving in and out of the Zona Franca, folds through the cracks in the house and into the soul of the unnamed woman. Here we have an example of the baroque linking interior and exterior worlds through the fold: material and idea, city and nature, capital and non-capital, Manaus and Amazonia, Amazonia and Brazil. This is the underside of development.

The titular story of *A caligrafia de Deus* carries with it the burlesque proliferation of the neobaroque. It was originally published as a standalone short story in 1975 and was reprinted for publication in 1993. The main characters Catarro and Izabel Pimentel (also called Índia Potira) are thrust into the path of violence unleashed by the *Operação Grande Zona*: "era o mais recente triunfo do Comissário Frota. Tinha convencido o Secretário de Segurança a autorizar um batalhão da PM a cercar o bairro do Japiim [...] que a PM e a Polícia, com quase cem homens, desenvolviam a gigantesca *Operação Grande Zona*, mantendo o bairro do Japiim completamente cercado e vasculhado" (it was the most recent triumph of Commissioner Frota. He had convinced the Security Forces to authorize a battalion of the Military Police to close in on the Japiim neighborhood [...] that the Military Police and the Police, with almost a hundred men, developed the gigantic *Operação Grande Zona*, rendering the Japiim neighborhood completely closed

and swept; 29). The allusion to the dictatorial scale of *Brasil Grande* and Castelo Branco's Operation Amazon, the *Operação Grande Zona* foregrounds the military dictatorship's exertion of violent force on the *palafita* (stilt house) neighborhoods in the name of development.

Catarro and Izabel Pimentel are caught within a detective framework that narrates backward from the discovery of their dead bodies. Yet Souza turns the detective genre and its noir styling on its head. Standing in the archetypal footsteps of the detective, it is the corrupt police commissioner who orchestrates the violent cleansing of the *palafitas* that extend into the *igarapés* near the Zona Franca, where residents continue to be priced out of housing above firm land and into stilt housing above the *igarapés*. Instead of uncovering an originary logic of crime, deviance, or perversion, "A caligrafia de Deus," as the title suggests, mobilizes the curvatures of the baroque to hollow out the rationalizations of the detective genre, as well as the cost benefit production of commodities in the Zona Franca. Catarro and Izabel lament throughout the story, using the platitude: "Deus escreve certo por linhas tortas" (20). The characters and the *palafitas* of Manaus are but manifestations of a *letra malfeita* (poorly written letter). In the moments before Catarro is killed by the police, he reminisces about Izabel— whom he does not yet know is dead—in a sardonic style, and that if Gods wrote at all, he had "uma péssima caligrafia" (terrible handwriting; 36).[101]

[101] See Monike Rabelo da Silva Lira and José Benedito dos Santos, "A desintegração da identidade cultural em *A caligrafia de Deus,* de Márcio Souza e em a *Muraida,* de Henrique João Wilkens," 120.

The Zona Franca links capitalist excess to the panoptic social control exhibited by the police state in Amazonia. Surveilled 24 hours a day by closed circuit cameras in the Zona Franca, Índia Potira thought, "seria uma loucura se voltasse a trabalhar na fábrica Sayonara Electronica, onde ganhava uma mixaria por mês e uma dedada por dia, quando numa só noite e em cada dedada ela podia faturar dez vezes o maldito salário que aqueles filhos da puta pagavam" (it would be insane if she returned to work in the Sayonara Electronica factory, where she made peanuts by the month and a thimble per day, when in one night she could factor ten times the damned salary that those SOBs paid; 32–33). She is a prostitute and Catarro, whose name refers to excess and discharge, is her pimp and lover, who sells bootlegged commodities, the excess from the Zona Franca:

> Catarro estava prosperando no negócio da Zona Franca, lucrando muito com a venda de canetas, de pomada afrodisíaca que era Vicks Vaporub e muito mais nos vídeos, que não passavam de um pedaço de madeira coberto por uma embalagem de papelão onde estavam coladas fotos de revistas pornográficas. (33)
>
> (Catarro was getting rich from his business in the free trade zone, profiting on the sale of pens, aphrodisiac salve, which was actually Vicks Vaporub, and even more from the sale of videos, which were in fact nothing more than a block of wood wrapped in paper with photos snitched from porno magazines.)

Catarro's scheme highlights the burlesque excess that is reproduced *ad infinitum* by the factories of the Zona Franca. Commodities are hollowed out once more, fetishized anew, and proliferated on the streets of Manaus as pure artifice. Proliferation, to repeat Sarduy's

conceptualization, "consists in obliterating the signifier of a given signified but not replacing it with another, from a distance that this finds the first, but rather a chain of signifiers that progress metonymically ultimately circumscribing the absent signifier" (170). This proliferation of bootlegged commodities, whose fetish erases its imbedded labor, parallels the driving absurdity of God's poor handwriting, or *logos* of the story. In other words, the curvatures along which signifiers proliferate around a signified are here the very same as those contraband networks of material excess and hollowed out commodities and similar in kind to the proliferated violence of the police force, gunning down the short story's characters, cleansing the *palafita* neighborhoods of Manaus.

"O velho curtume do bairro" completes Souza's collection, setting the stage for a community health and labor struggle along the banks of the polluted Igarapé Educandos. Souza's ironic style that strikes at the core of a contemporary polemic: to preserve or develop Amazonia.[102] The story's setting is that of the Curtume Londrino, an old tannery owned by the brothers Duval and Clodoaldo Antunes who have been forced into obsolescence by the Zona Franca.[103] Development spells doom for the tannery, and in a

[102] During the Amazonian fires of 2019, the decision of preservation or development was debated worldwide, as President Jair Bolsonaro opted for a developmentalist and neocolonial approach to Amazonia citing questions of sovereignty in the region.

[103] Souza chronicles the bodily effects of important substitution industrialization in the brothers Londrino: "É que as coisas já não eram as mesmas desde que Manaus tinha sido transformada em Zona Franca, e que essas transformações estavam dando uma úlcera ao seu irmão mais novo" (He knew with certainty that things weren't the same since Manaus turned into the Zona Franca, and those transformations were giving his brother another ulcer; 131).

modernizing Manaus, bull's hides or jaguar pelts were no longer the central export.[104] The tannery's imported British façade, once was "perfeitamente integrado à paisagem" (perfectly integrated into the landscape; 135) of Manaus, but had now become obsolete. The brothers Antunes turned into "uns fósseis . . . Dois animais antediluvianos que sobreviveram . . . " (fossils, two animals that survived the great flood; 137). I claim that while Souza raises these important environmental debates, he creates the possibility for an alternative reading, out from between the rock and hard place, and into an oblique space. In "O velho curtume," the false opposition between cutting jobs and saving the environment is underscored by the proliferation of "slow violence," or, as Rob Nixon has theorized, the accretive environmental toxification stretched over a long period of time in contrast to more immediate forms of violence like battery or murder. I focus on two interrelated phenomena: the *igarapés* are a dumping ground, and by the proliferating nature of toxicity, the bodies of people in the area become dumping grounds.

Manaus of "O velho curtume" is a fetid, toxic place, where the tannery workers have one important problem, as one of the workers points out, "já não temos olfato, saturamos" (we no longer have a sense of smell, we are saturated; 136). Opposite the brother Antunes is Mariana, a young professor at the Universidade Federal do Amazonas and recent transplant to Manaus, who founds a non-profit organization MALIMPAS that fights for clean water along Manaus's *igarapés.* Studies from laboratory tests "de água de diversos rios e igarapés indicavam estado de calamidade, porque as águas estavam

[104] Andre Antunes situates Amazonia within the global hide market writing, "Documentos revelam: até um milhão de animais foram mortos por ano no século 20, para abastecer mercado mundial de peles" (Documents reveal up to a million animals were killed every year during the twentieth century to supply the global hide market).

contaminadas por dejetos químicos ou pelo despejo sistemático de esgotos domésticos" (of the water from diverse rivers and igarapés indicated a state of calamity, because the waters were contaminated by waste chemicals or through the systematic dumping of domestic waste; 146). Furthermore, the chrome used in the tannery, according to Mariana, had been found at high levels, which can be fatal: "Nós estivemos fazendo um estudo nos arquivos sanitários do Educandos, e descobrimos que mais de oitenta por centro de ex-trabalhadores do curtume morreram de câncer, especialmente câncer pulmonar e torácico" (We have conducted a study of in the sanitation archive of Educandos, and we discovered that more than 80 percent of former tannery workers died of cancer, specifically pulmonary or thoracic cancer; 152). In the space of the short story, Souza manages to capture the toxicity of the tannery and *igarapé* Educandos along with the drawn-out environmental effects of slow violence.

"O velho curtume" describes two distinct moments of Amazonian development: ruination and proliferation. These timescales, importantly, are emblematic in the short story of shifting modes of production, from extraction to import substitution industrialization. Susan Buck-Morss writes in the *Dialectics of Seeing*, "the image of 'the ruin,' an emblem not only of the transitoriness and fragility of capitalist culture, but also its destructiveness, is pronounced" (164). This quote aptly describes the timescales in "O velho curtume": State-run capitalist development renders tanning obsolete, which explains the "transitoriness and fragility" of modern capitalism, but at the same time, this "transitoriness and fragility" proliferates by other means, as slow ecological disaster. We read the ruin not as the collapse back into nature, and thus, timelessness, but as toxicity that proliferates in water and human bodies well beyond the ruin. "The true picture of the

past flits by," writes Walter Benjamin in the "Theses on the Philosophy of History," "For every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably" (255). As the ruin leaps out into our experience of daily life, the particular experience of ruination is that of neobaroque proliferation, which is oblique; more an anaesthetic than an aesthetic.[105] Slow violence, after all, breaks down bodies on an environmental timescale of toxicity. Souza writes messianic time experienced environmentally and infrastructurally. That is, below conscious experience, and only attended to when it is too late.

The ruin is an important point of transition between Souza and Hatoum, as both writers set the drama of their short stories in the ruins of Manaus during the 1960s and 1970s. Souza and Hatoum both take part in writing about Amazonia during a particular moment in time: shifting modes of production, from extractivism to import substitution industrialization. In the following section, I move away from a focus on the lived experience of the (neo)baroque effects of shifting modes of production in Manaus, and toward a critique on allegory, modernity, and nature writ large across Amazonia. Hatoum reminds us in *A cidade ilhada* that the wagers made on modernity were never made in full, and the binaries of nature/culture, language/Other, and built environment/natural environment are deeply flawed.

A cidade ilhada: the ruin

Hatoum is among the most well-known contemporary Amazonian writer. His

[105] See Buck-Morss's "Aesthetics and Anaesthetics," 38.

literary works, until recently, largely take place in Manaus. He published his first novel, *Relato de um Certo Oriente*, in 1989, which, like *Dois irmãos*, won the Prêmio Jubati, Brazil's most prestigious literary prize. *Cinzas do norte* (2005) earned Hatoum the Portuguese Telecom Prize for Literature. As a son of Lebanese parents, Hatoum's work often chronicles the lives of immigrant groups in Amazonia. For Hatoum, Manaus is like an island in time and space to which he returns and that he finds in a state altogether different than when he left. His characters adopt allegorical significance in the history of western modernity, and in turn express their disillusionment within it.

In the story "Varandas da Eva," the narrator recalls his first sexual experience in a *palafita* on Igarapé Manaus. He remembers "Não era longe do porto, mas naquela época a noção de distância era outra. O tempo era mais longo, demorado, ninguém falava em desperdiçar horas ou minutos . . . Mas aquele lugar, Varandas da Eva, ainda era um mistério" (it wasn't far from the port, but in that time the notion of distance was different. Time was longer, slowed, no one spoke of wasting hours or minutes . . . But that place, Varandas da Eva, was still a mystery; 7). The burlesque club lies at Manaus's margins, along an *igarapé*, a site vulnerable to erasure; the Manaus of Hatoum's youth is the city before the *Zona Franca*. With his uncle *Ran*, a recurring character throughout Hatoum's *oeuvre*, and his two friends Minotauro and Tarso, the boys head for Varandas da Eva, a burlesque club near other balconied buildings that buttress the *igarapé*. Minotauro was predictably bullheaded, and Tarso, or Tarsus, the Turkish city where Cleopatra and Mark Anthony are said to have met, was "triste e envergonhado: nunca disse onde morava. Desconfiávamos que o teto dele era um dos barracos perto do igarapé de Manaus" (sad and ashamed: he never said where he lived. We doubted that his roof was one of the

shacks close to the Igarapé Manaus; 8). The story operates on the plane of allegory, which, for Benjamin, was the favored mechanism of the baroque, and was where, on the level of prose, "History merges into setting"; where history "is scattered like seeds over the ground" (60). Allegory operates in the characters and their locales: the *palafitas*, the burlesque interior of Varandas da Eva, and the *igarapés*, which, taking on a burlesque aspect, become clear only at night.

As time passes, Mintauro, like his name would suggest, enters the labyrinthine world of jungle commandos which grew massively during the military dictatorship and were stationed in Manaus, near the Zona Franca. Tarso loses touch altogether, until one day while the protagonist is walking near the port and *Igarapé Manaus* engorged during the wet season, he sees something:

> Foi então que vi, numa canoa, um rosto conhecido. Era Tarso. Remou lentamente até a margem e saltou; depois tirou um cesto da canoa e pôs o fardo nas costas, a alça em volta da testa, como faz um índio. O corpo do meu amigo, curvado pelo peso, era o de um homem. Subiu uma escadinha de madeira, deixou o cesto na porta de uma palafita. (13)
>
> (It was then when I saw, in a canoe, a familiar face. It was Tarsus. He rowed slowly toward the bank and hopped out; after he threw a net and bundle on his back, the shoulder strap on his forehead, like an Indian would. My friend's body, bent under the weight, was that of a man. He scaled a wooden step, dropped the net on the door of a *palafita*.)

Tarso's name leads us to think through the city, toward an urban critique wherein the *igarapés* come to represent the fluvial underside of *Paris dos Trôpicos.* Along the

igarapés, ruins come out to meet the passerby. Greeting Tarso at the door of the *palafita* is the same woman from that night at Varandas da Eva, who we discover is Tarso's mother, and who, perhaps by magic, has not aged a single day. Horrified, the protagonist exclaims, "Nunca voltei àquele lugar" (I never returned to that place; 14). The protagonist turns his back on the horrific past lived out in the present. The protagonist's horror is representative of the social attitude toward the *igarapé*, and its enigmatic character in Amazonian development. Hatoum is relating allegory to the margins of the city that leap forth from the material world so as to tell us of their transience.

Hatoum's short story "A Ninfa do Teatro Amazonas" shifts our focus from the action of the stage, to the stage itself.[106] This story refers the reader to the power of the frame, that power of the artifice to influence our being in the world.[107] During a torrential downpour of the rainy season, a pregnant woman from the streets slips through the doors of the Teatro Amazonas in the dark of night "deitada no veludo vermelho, entre duas filas de cadeiras, ela esperou o instante propicio para dar à luz" (lying down in the red velvet, between two rows of seats, she waited for the proper time to give birth; 90). Upstairs, Álvaro, a security guard of some 90 years old, with revolver in hand, functioning more like a cane than an armament, listens: "Ele não sabia afirmar se era uma voz, um canto ou os acordes de um piano; parecia vir de longe, mas provavelmente do interior do teatro"

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[106] William Egginton writes in *The Theater of Truth*, "A world is imagined, and reality gives way. This is the very essence of the Baroque, the fading of frames, the loss of bearings when looking upon a representation" (106).

[107] See Miguel de Cervantes's *entremés* "El retablo de las maravillas" in which Chanfalla and Chirinos convince an audience into believing that the empty stage is indeed populated by puppets acting out the travails of Samson.

(He couldn't conclude if it was a voice, a song or the chords of a piano; it seemed to come from far away, probably from inside of the theater; 91). Hatoum's prose gives the impression that Álvaro is dreaming, and that the theater has come alive.

After Álvaro descends the mezzanine down the curved lateral hallways above which hang names of famous playwrights like Calderón de la Barca, he pulls a lever from backstage casting a beam of light onto the curtain. The beam of light lines up with the belly button of a nymph depicted on the curtain in a shell carried by two men in the confluence of the Solimões and Negro Rivers. Hatoum's writing is ambiguous to the extent that the old guard is unable to distinguish between the woman who has given birth in the chairs below from the nymph on the curtain brought to light on stage. The old man collapses leaving the set intact and is later hauled off by medical personnel and brought to the hospital where he explains his evening in the theater: "O psiquiatra de plantão, dr. S. L., afirmou que o relato do sr. Álvaro é a versão de um homem que há algum tempo vem sendo tragado pelo pântano da senilidade" (The floor psychiatrist, Dr. S.L. confirmed that the story of Mr. Álvaro is that of a man who has for some time been pulled into the swamp of senility; 93). The Teatro Amazonas represents the apogee of a rubber boom city, serving as the site of some of Brazil's first electric streetlights and trolley car lines, which constitutes the frame in which modernity was possible in Manaus. It is in Hatoum's work that the frame taken to its logical limits. The theater's most devoted attendee slips into a state of senility in which the Teatro Amazonas still has the power to frame the imagination of those living in Manaus. Hatoum lays the groundwork for a symptomatic reading here, suggesting the theater's mediatic influence lives on in the

minds of the senile as it has largely been overtaken by other new media: the vast production of TVs leaving the Zona Franca.

"A natureza ri da cultura" completes *A cidade ilhada* as an exercise in translation. The dramatis personae returns to Manaus to uncover secrets from his past, driven by the preoccupation of being a provincial writer from Amazonia. Clues are written across the built environment and its crumbling infrastructures. The protagonist remembers his older sister's friends, most of whom were stuck up, but among them was Armand Verne, "um homem muito imaginoso, com trejeitos de dândi e que já morou em Lisboa, Luanda e Macau antes de chegar a Manaus" (a very imaginative man, with the gestures of a dandy and who had lived in Lisbon, Luanda, and Macau before arriving in Manaus), and Felix Delatour "um bretão circunspeto, quase albino, que sofria de uma enfermidade rara: o gigantismo. Lecionava francês e, ao contrário de Verne, nunca fundou uma sociedade filantrópica ou algo semelhante" (a circumspect Brit, almost albino, that suffered from a rare disease: gigantism. He taught French, and, contrary to Verne, never founded a philanthropic society or something similar; 96).

Language is untranslatable, yet this difference nonetheless drives Delatour's language instruction. During French instruction, Delatour suggests to the young protagonist, "um deslize no sotaque ou na entonação já marca uma distância entre os idiomas, e essa distância é fundamental para manter o mistério da língua nativa" (a slip in accent or intonation already marks a distance between languages, and that distance is fundamental to maintain the mystery of native languages; 97). The mystery is that of all language, brought to bear by otherness. Along Spivakian lines, Delatour suggests to the young protagonist the most important thing is to "encontrar outra voz de Rimbaud"

(encounter the other voice of Rimbaud; 99). The other voice of Rimbaud, as Spivak would suggest, is in fact the other of the voice of Rimbaud, and not simply the Amazonian who learns French in order to be modern. In "Can the Subaltern Speak," Spivak quotes Derrida's caution of "rendering delirious that interior voice that is the voice of the other in us" (cited in Spivak 36). Hatoum likens the delirious voice of the other in one's own language—the other of the voice of Rimbaud—to the delirious anachronisms in the built environment of Manaus, and in particular, to the ruin, the ruin, where the delirium of language is experienced materially.

For Benjamin, the ruin was "the finest material of baroque creation" (*The Origin of the German Tragic Drama* 178). He writes that the ruin "merges into setting" revealing an "overripeness" of non-human nature (178). The allegory appeals to the ruin because as representation fails and certain meanings falls out of fashion, the built environments and infrastructures that holds them together also decay, or what Penksy calls in "Types of Ruins," "the dialectic relating history and nature" (68). Hatoum writes decay across literary Manaus, and "A Natureza ri da cultura" pivots on a return to Manaus's historic city center in ruin. It is here where the irony of the otherness of language is written.

The young protagonist returns to Manaus, after living on the Brazilian coast, a common trope throughout Hatoum's *ouvre*. While walking the city he once knew, the protagonist turned the corner at the end of a block that ends in the Negro River where Delatour's house was in ruin,

> Uma casa em ruínas: raízes de um apuizeiro estrangulam a estátua da Diana e ameaçam derrubar uma parede que foi branca. Crianças imundas e

> miseráveis cheiram cola; uma delas, com um pedaço de carvão, garatuja o muro que cerca o jardim; outras, deitadas no pátio, acariciam um cão magro, de pelagem escura. Um cheiro de podridão e excremento emana da sala, o espaço da biblioteca. Na parede externa, li uma frase curiosa escrita a cal: "A natureza ri da cultura".
>
> Antes de me afastar do sobrado, a criança que rabiscava o muro se volta para mim. Calada, imóvel, com o pedaço de carvão na mão direita, a criança me olha com estranheza. (102)
>
> (A house in ruin: roots from an *apuizeiro* [ficus] strangle a statue of Diana and threaten to bring down a white wall that used to be white. Filthy and miserable kids huff glue; one of them, with a chunk of charcoal, scribbles on the wall close to the garden; others, laying on the patio pet a skinny dog with dark fur. The smell of rot and excrement emanates from the house, the library space. On the outer wall, I read a curious phrase written in whitewash: "nature laughs at culture."
>
> Before leaving the house, the boy who scribbled on the wall turned toward me. Calm, unmoving, with a piece of charcoal in his right hand, the boy looked at me with strangeness.)

The odor of decay in Delatour's once neoclassical library gives way to the smell of kids huffing glue, and the phrase "A natureza ri da cultura" emerges as a baroque emblem. The Vivitur ingenio emblem of Schoonhovius, circa 1618, depicts a similar condition:

"Regna cadunts…" (Kingdoms fall; cited in Buck-Morss 163).[108] The quote in chalk for Hatoum is a reminder of things that fall out of fashion and into decay.

The word "natureza," written on the wall of a crumbling building in Manaus, holds a particular type of irony, in that "cultura" and modernity are constituted by the constant reformulation of the word "nature" as it relates to Amazonia: the sublime, abundant, horrific, and *tabula rasa* for the nation, to name a few. "Natureza" written out onto the wall is imbedded with its own otherness, even as it laughs at dialectically opposed culture. This revelation of language's otherness is made possible in the decay of the historic sectors of Manaus, pushed to the margins by a growing suburban and industrial life. Hatoum exposes this great irony in the stare exchanged between the boy and the protagonist. It is the protagonist who is strange, after all, because he too is a ruin, like Delatour's house; the streets of the *flâneur* of the *Paris dos Trôpicos* at a dead end. From the ruin Hatoum inverts the gaze of modernity in Manaus brought out in the crumbling infrastructure in a city that decays from the inside out.

Conclusion

Extraction and construction shape Amazonian life and literature, its history, and its futures. Souza and Hatoum critique the development strategies of the military dictatorship for the city of Manaus, and Amazonia on a larger scale. Their short stories tell how people are caught up within a violent and changing network of objects of development: factories, suburbs, bootlegged commodities, jaguar hides, stilt housing,

[108] Buck-Morss includes the rejected frontispiece to Charles Baudelaire's *Les fleurs du mal* in the Benjaminian catalogue of baroque emblems (199 *Dialectics of Seeing*).

theaters, and libraries. These objects are infrastructures, commodities, and ruins, and they communicate with the reader about Manaus during the dictatorial development boom. Separated by more than ten years, both Souza and Hatoum write in neobaroque registers. The Amazonian themes of construction and extraction are turned on their head as proliferation, folds, and decay, classic themes of the neobaroque. By reading in Souza and Hatoum manifestations of the neobaroque, we better understand the inner workings of development on differing scales. Souza and Hatoum cut across binaries in the burlesque style of the baroque: material and idea, city and nature, capital and non-capital, Manaus and Amazonia, Amazonia and Brazil.

The hidden effects of large development projects, like the Zona Franca of Manaus, are written across literatures of the Global South. However, continued scholarship on these projects and the objects they produce in Amazonia are required, as this chapter is in no way exhaustive of the potential avenues of inquiry in the realm of Amazonian infrastructures, commodities, and ruins. These objects narrate the process of development, and in particular, those regions considered to be Nature, or Other.

In 2017, then Presidential candidate Jair Bolsonaro questioned in a trip to Manaus, "Será que a Amazônia ainda é nossa?" (Is Amazonia still ours?).[109] And in 2019, his interrogative was deemed rhetorical, as he released his plans to build dams, bridges, and new segments of highway in Northern Brazil. This rhetoric is indicative of a renewed development boom in Amazonia, and perhaps with the same old, neocolonial tricks. Where there are neocolonial moves toward development, there are neobaroque

[109] See "Em Manaus, Bolsonaro questiona se Brasil tem soberania sobre Amazônia," 2017.

relations among the human and non-human that reveal its underside, its (il)logical components.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has employed a comparative approach to studying infrastructural, environmental, and bodily entanglements in Latin American literature. In these works, infrastructure operates as an environmental force that passes into the communities most vulnerable to toxicity, incarceration, and dispossession. While these effects are certainly widespread across megaprojects, this dissertation positions literatures from various genres and forms as testimony for Chilean miners, Afro-Antilleans in Panama, and those living in precarious housing in Chile, Panama, and Brazil. This literary analysis challenges prevailing wisdom about infrastructure's evasion and eruption into view upon failure, and instead argues that infrastructures on the scale of megaprojects have the capacity to consistently operate on all parts of life, and in particular, as non-human nature. This dissertation has focused on works from, or reflecting upon, the mid-twentieth century, marking two interrelated global phenomena: the diffusion of global developmentalism, and a Great Acceleration of homogenic climate change. This dissertation highlights the growing rift between the promises of development—which are partly the promises of modernity—and the awareness of environmental crisis and examines where promises of infrastructure have been made most earnestly i.e., in megaprojects. By attending to the entanglements, illogic, and toxicity of large infrastructure present in the literary works of Neruda, Tejeira, Beleño, Souza, and Hatoum, I center the bodily experiences of those living near megaprojects as a rebuke of the sublime aesthetics that accompany modernity, development, and large infrastructure.

Returning to Fredric Jameson's observation on narration, present in literature are both dialogic antagonisms as well as imaginings outside of these antagonisms. This

double-bind is especially apparent in literature that examines environmental issues, which, on the one hand, arises from environmental crisis and its disproportionate effects of indigenous, afro-descendants, and women, but also, these literary works create in-between spaces where new imaginings of the human and non-human can take place. This dissertation has borrowed from the field of environmental humanities in order to ask the more general question about the role of the arts during environmental crisis, what Victoria Saramago characterizes as the widening gap between environmental "changes in real life and their unchanging presence in fictional works" (8). The literary works I have analyzed in this chapter, however, exhibit prescience as they evade the static category of nature, what Alejo Carpentier describes in *Los pasos perdidos* as "lo verde cerrado" (the closed-off green; 146). A materialist-immanentist approach reads literature as constituted of a plenitude of entanglements of materials and enunciations, of environmental collapse and collections of voices and enunciations. For this reason, the study of megaproject literature requires an open-ended methodology that contextualizes literary and material changes in the earth as well as in the formation of social classes, racial, and gender categories. Assemblage theory provides an important theoretical opportunity to analyze the social implications of the entanglements of infrastructure and non-human nature that are not couched in representation or literary mimesis. Ian Buchanan claims assemblage theory asks the question of "whatever could have happened for things to come to this?" (*Assemblage Theory and Method* 47). In order to answer this question, this dissertation has employed the territorial aspect of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the assemblage to pinpoint where, on the one hand, megaprojects create zones and segregation, and on the other, where the very assumptions of infrastructure become viscous, expanding these

zones and segregations via pollutants in the air and water, or through invasive plant species.

Reviewing the argumentation of this dissertation, Chapter Two posits that the environmentalism of Neruda must be expanded to infrastructural thinking. The externalism ascribed to Neruda's *Residencia en la tierra* is a far cry from the enmeshed character of geologic and infrastructural forces in *Canto general*. In fact, Neruda's environmentalism puts into conversation two interrelated realities: large-scale environmental damage and small-scale poisoning of workers and those living within extractive zones. On the one hand, Neruda voices a metabolic rift—between the productive force of mining and the finite materiality of Earth—opening wider at Chuquicamata mine through the disjunction between geologic time and capitalist turnover. On the other hand, the sub-sections of Canto XXXVIII evoke the effects of chemical infrastructures like acid and iodine on the human body, particularly on itinerate miners and those living in impoverished conditions in Northern Chile. While scholarship has examined the panoramic vision Latin America in *Canto general*, Neruda's journey through Northern Chile in Canto XXXVIII can be better described as a journey through strata: geologic, regional, and corporeal. This approach moves away from an externalist reading of non-human nature in *Canto general* and instead allows for clearer examination of the effects of infrastructure across temporal and material scales. Read in this way, *Canto general* is not only prophetic, as it predicts the evacuation of Chuquicamata due to airborne chemical infrastructures, but also points out the accretive effects of infrastructural toxicity across time that evades perception, but nonetheless poisons the human body.

Chapter Three analyzes two Canal Novels written in 1960s that challenge popularized aesthetics of the Panama Canal. Theodore Roosevelt's environmental approach to Panama, along with the City Beautiful architectural movement, implanted in the Canal Zone a sublime aesthetic that framed the privileged way of relating to non-human nature, and by extension, infrastructure. The Canal Novels, however, call into question the sublime aesthetic motif that painted humankind as a small figure against the backdrop of a colossal non-human nature and infrastructure. Gil Blas Tejeira diverges from the sublime character of the Panama Canal by documenting the sunken histories and death toll, particularly of Afro-Antilleans, that reside just below the surface of the Canal's waters. Joaquín Beleño, on the other hand, points to the peculiar enmeshments of the human, infrastructure, and non-human nature that occur in the segregated Panama Canal Zone. Beleño writes of *paja canalera*, an infrastructural weed imported for canal fortification, invading the Panamanian landscape and cutting into the zonian inmates that toil to cut it down. Scholarship on the Canal Novel points to the genre's decolonial struggle of the 1960s, but this chapter identifies this decolonial struggle at the intersection of environmental, infrastructural, and racial forces.

Chapter Four examines the neobaroque aesthetics of proliferation and ruination in short story collections by Márcio Souza and Milton Hatoum that chronicle the events surrounding the colossal industrial sector of the Zona Franca of Manaus. The six short stories analyzed in this chapter recount the shift toward import substitution industrialization during the Brazilian military dictatorship. The toxicity of the city's waterways (igarapés), the state-led cleansing of adjacent neighborhoods, ruins of the neoclassical architecture of Paris of the Tropics, and the proliferation of new

commodities and contraband on the streets illuminate the underside of development in the city of Manaus. This chapter expands upon Rob Nixon's characterization of the "drama deficit" of slow violence, and attempts to answer the question of how exactly does slow violence occur, and how is it caught up within the immediacy of other forms of violence? While scholarship has focused on the epic character of Souza's other works and the bildungsroman framework of Hatoum's novels set in Manaus, I read Souza and Hatoum answering these questions by way of neobaroque proliferation and ruination, which reveals new industries and environmental collapse as two sides of the same coin. This chapter was written on the eve of the 2019 Amazonian wildfires, a moment of a renewed developmentalism in Amazonia—particularly by President Jair Bolsonaro—brought about by agribusiness. The questions posed about development in this chapter can be adapted to examine these widespread wildfires in the Brazilian Amazon and their immediate and accretive effects.

The literary analysis in this dissertation offers important avenues for future inquiry, particularly with regard to megaprojects of the twenty first century. The discourse of Latin American megaprojects of the twenty first century have taken on two distinct patterns: ecopessimism and sustainability. An ecopessimistic approach is exemplified in comments made by Nicaraguan president Daniel Ortega in 2014 while discussing at the concessions made to the Hong Kong Nicaragua Development firm (HKND) to build the Gran Canal Interoceánico de Nicaragua, which would bisect the country, passing through Lake Nicaragua, making it the largest megaprojects on earth: "ese lago está contaminado . . . allá había una especie de tiburones en el agua dulce que prácticamente ha sido extinguida sin necesidad de canal. ¿Y por qué? Porque grandes

inversiones, grandes plantas procesadoras, son muy costosas para que se pueda precisar todo lo que va al gran lago de Nicaragua" (that lake is contaminated . . . there used to be a species of freshwater shark that has practically become extinct without the necessity of the canal . . . And why? Because of large investments, large processing plants, which are very costly in order to reap the benefits of Lake Nicaragua; *La Prensa Nicaragua*).[110] As opposed to characterizing Lake Nicaragua as an untapped natural resource, Ortega's comments frame Lake Nicaragua as a dumping ground, and what makes Lake Nicaragua a resource for the Ortega-HKND canal project is that it *has* been exhausted, contaminated by other industries. The coloniality of nature, which positions non-human nature as a resource for extraction, shifts entirely toward infrastructures: from dumping ground to canal. Ortega's ecopessimism diverges greatly from the environmental writings of former Sandinistas Ernesto Cardenal and Giaconda Belli and operationalizes environmental collapse as bone fides for the construction of a megaproject.

Sustainability, on the other hand, maintains a utopic equilibrium between capitalist development and environmental impact. Latin American development models in the twenty first century have largely been framed by the concept of sustainability. In 2003, CEPAL began the "Energía y desarrollo sustentable en América Latina y el Caribe" project in concert with the Organización Latinoamericana de Energía (OLADE) and the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) in order to shift developmental thinking in Latin America toward sustainability. The project's guidebook published in the same year

[110] Ortega commented as recently as August 2019 that his government "no ha renunciado" (has not abandoned) the Nicaraguan Canal Project. See "Ortega revive proyecto de canal interoceánico en Nicaragua."

centralizes infrastructure within a sustainable growth model that could be implemented across the Americas.[111] Colossal projects like the Sistema de Interconexión Eléctrica de los Países de América Central have, on the one hand, championed sustainability, while on the other, raised serious concerns over human rights violations, disappearances, and assassinations. Emblematic of a sustainable megaproject of the twenty first century is the Nuevo Aeropuerto Internacional de la Ciudad de México, designed by Mexican architect Fernando Romero and Foster+Partners in 2014, which self-describes as *the* "Aeropuerto Sustentable" (Sustainable Airport) and carries a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) designation. In a press conference in 2014, President Enrique Peña Nieto was clear about the path of sustainable development via colossal infrastructure,[112] yet an obvious paradox emerges. If air travel contributes to some 5% of global emissions of CO2 and other greenhouse gasses—a percentage expected to grow—what sustainability is achievable with a megaproject of this type?[113] Guattari puts the paradox of sustainability in a unique way:

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[111] See *Energía y desarrollo sustentable en América Latina y el Caribe*, 119.

[112] Peña Nieto claims, "Por su magnitud, diseño y beneficio social, el nuevo aeropuerto será una obra trascendental, emblema del México moderno….El proyecto está diseñado para mejorar la salud ambiental de la región y rescatar integralmente una zona que hoy se encuentra ambientalmente degradada" (Because of its magnitude, design, and social benefit, the new airport will be a transcendental project, an emblem of Modern Mexico….The project is designed to improve the environmental health of the region and rescue a zone that today is environmentally degraded). See "Nuevo Aeropuerto Internacional de la Ciudad de México 'Benito Juárez.'"

[113] See Overton, "Fact Sheet. The Growth in Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Commercial Aviation."

> So, wherever we turn, there is the same nagging paradox: on the one hand, the continuous development of new techno-scientific means to potentially resolve the dominant ecological issues and reinstate socially useful activities on the surface of the planet, and, on the other hand, the inability of organized social forces and constituted subjective formations to take hold on these resources in order to make them work. (22)

How do "green design" and "green energy" ensure the persistence of the coloniality of nature and infrastructure and continue to obfuscate zones, segregations, and the inconspicuous effects of infrastructure like enmeshment and toxicity? This dissertation has set the stage for a more robust discussions of sustainability and large infrastructural projects of the twenty first century across the Americas. What Guattari fails to mention in the quotation above, however, are the social and subjective formations that have emerged from Latin America responding to the environmental collapse and large infrastructure.

Additional avenues for future development of this project include indigenous and feminist approaches to the intersection of infrastructure and non-human nature in Latin America. Buen Vivir/Vivir Bien in Ecuador and Bolivia, the Consejo Cívio de Organizaciones Populares e Indígenas de Honduras (COPINH), and the Rede Sustentabilidade in Brazil, are just a few examples of diverse political and grassroots movements that create alternatives to extraction, predatory agribusiness, and hydro-infrastructure by centering indigenous ways of knowing and living and are largely led by women. The murder of Goldman Environmental Prize winner and founder of COPINH, Berta Cáceres, serves as a tragic reminder that indigenous women have become vanguards of the environmental movements across Latin America but are also at greatest

risk for becoming victims of violence of the State, paramilitary, and private interests. As megaprojects of the twenty first century continue to be framed by the optics of the sublime, literatures that center the lives of women and indigenous peoples continue to serve as essential resources for understanding overlaps, enmeshments, and entanglements of the human, infrastructure, and non-human nature. The research presented in this dissertation is also potentially useful for the analysis of emergent genres of Latin American literature like *literatura ambiental*, which imagines social and subjective formations possible during environmental collapse. Latin American novels, poetry, and short stories that center megaprojects prove their relevance beyond the page as they serve as testimony for voices silenced by environmental/infrastructural harm and present inexhaustible opportunities to imagine more equitable and just futures across the Americas.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1. *Paja canalera* (bottom) at the Panama Canal. Photo taken by author, 2015.

Fig. 2. “Chuquicamata Antigua.” Codelco. Taken on December 9, 2009. Creative Commons. www.flickr.com/photos/codelco/albums/72157622968391706/.

Fig. 3. “Chuquicamata Antigua.” Codelco. Taken on December 9, 2009. Creative Commons. www.flickr.com/photos/codelco/albums/72157622968391706/.

Fig 4. “Chuquicamata antigua.” Codelco, December 9, 2009. Creative Commons. www.flickr.com/photos/codelco/albums/72157622968391706/.

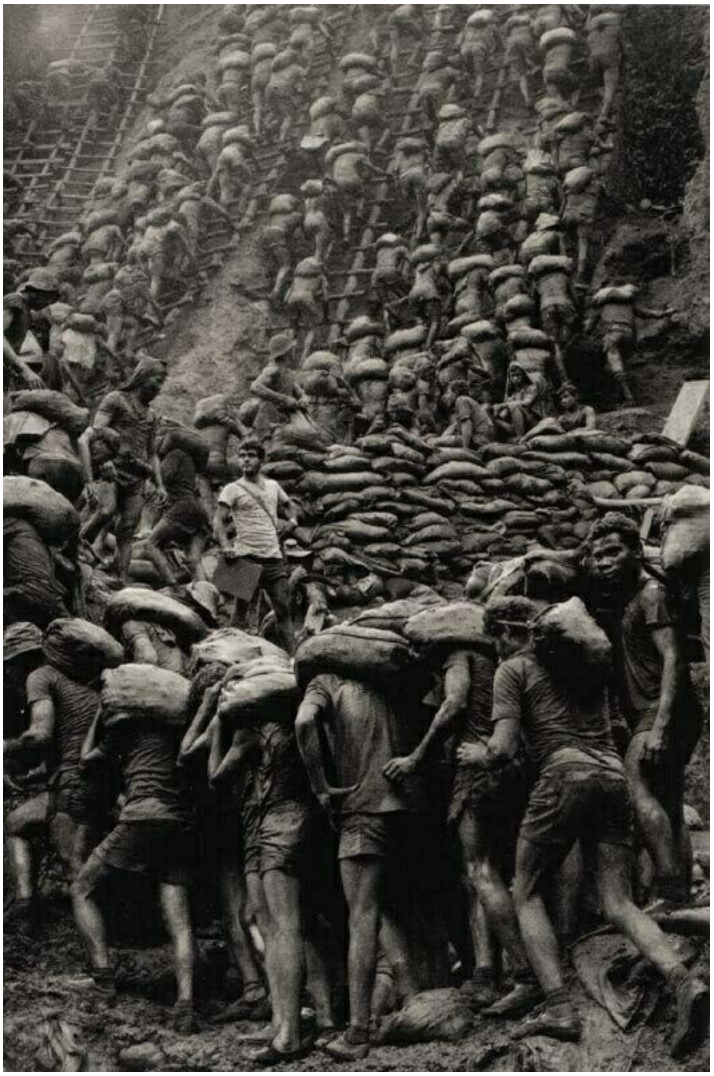

Fig. 5. *Workers. An Archaeology of the Workers Industrial Age* (1993). Creative Commons. www.flickr.com/photos/136879256@N02/36252483224 /in/photostream/.

Fig. 6. “Thirteenth Labor of Hercules” at the Palace of Fine Arts. San Fransisco, CA. Photo taken by author, 2017.

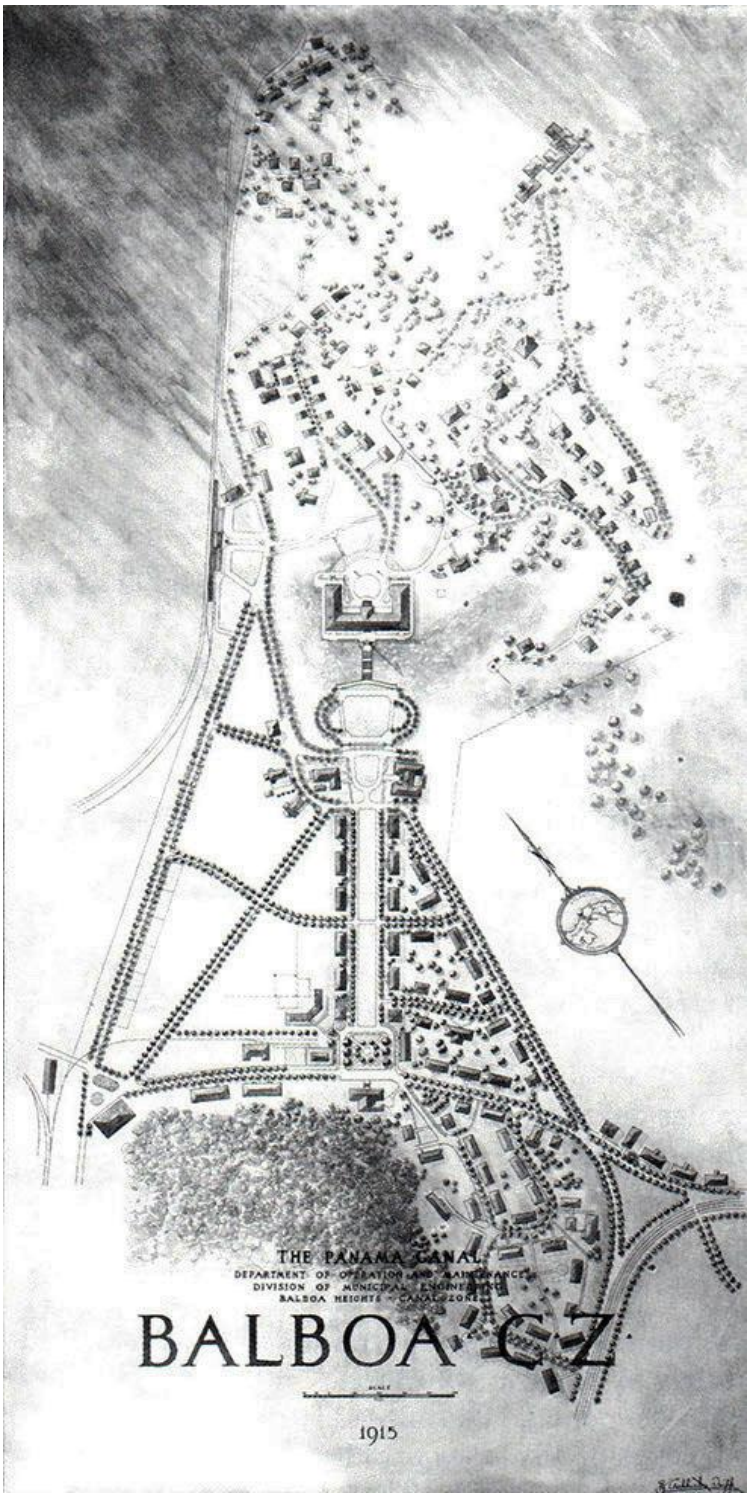

Fig. 7. Balboa CZ map highlights *el Prado*. The Panama Canal Department of Municipal Engineering, Balboa Heights Canal Zone. 1915 Courtesy of Panama Vieja Escuela. www.panamaviejaescuela.com/la-antigua-zona-del-canal/

Fig. 8. William Van Ingen. Panama Canal Mural in the Canal Administration Building. Courtesy of Sandra Cohen Rose. www.flickr.com/photos/73416633@N00 /4241773952/in/photolist-5Ff2xA-7sQcBE-7sLcE6-7sQbmG-7sLgdz/.

Fig 9. Rachel Braga. “Zona Franca de Manaus-SUFRAMA” 1982. EuropaCEPT.eu. www.e-filatelija.lt/en/america/brazil-1982-free-trade-zone/philatelic-store-9223.html.

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